

DAGGERS DRAWN:
collected essays

olive x. odille
and
luther blissett

summer
twentyten

at the foot of the chair
a smoking gun
head in hands

pick up the pieces

dears,

here are some things.
you can read them.
the order is unsystematic.
you can start anywhere, skip around.
this is not a front-to-back kind of operation.

we don't know what it's about.
if nothing else, it is a snapshot, a map
of our current obsessions.

do what you wish with it.
hold it to a lighter and
create a burst of light in a sad parking lot.
let us talk to each other.

parties interested in who silkscreened the cover
shall be directed towards the lovely kate shearman.

we are, of course, indebted to a lot of people.
we stole much of this from people we like.
probably you. we are grateful.
may the general intellect live.

to all those in the streets.
to all those alone in empty rooms.
to all those who are trying something and they don't know what it is.
--our love.

yours with daggers,
olive and luther

do not hesitate:
blackolivefurever@gmail.com
lutherblissett@gmail.com

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0.0 SOURCE CODE

0.1

Once I sat in Bobst library on the cold linoleum for hours pouring over a book by Mathew Goulish called *39 Microlectures: In Proximity of Performance*. I checked it out and kept it on my windowsill for a year. These were the main headings in the table of contents:

0. What is a microlecture? 1. Repetition 2. Criticism 3. Pedagogy 4. Beginnings 5. Hair 6. Women and Directing 7. Technologies of Dying 8. How does a Work Work Where? 9. The Kaleidoscopic Self 10. Three Noteworthy Departures 11. Failure 00. To the reader-2

The next summer, Mathew Goulish and I were on the same airplane flying out of Croatia.

0.2

Once I tried to take a class called 'J.M. Coetzee and Metafiction.' I liked the word 'metafiction,' but I had never heard of Coetzee. Upon attending the first meeting, the professor promptly kicked me out for not having read any of his novels. I was embarrassed. On my birthday, I woke up early and took myself to a French cafe where I started reading Coetzee's novel *Diary of a Bad Year*, an essayistic novel written from three different perspectives simultaneously by splitting the page into thirds, Coetzee used numbered headings to transition between different topics.

0.3

Once Richard Dienst gave a paper on *The Coming Insurrection* by the invisible committee. He organized his talk around five successive words: Manual, Invisible, Whatever, Bonds, Carrots. It was the one paper that made everything exciting again, that pulled me to the bookshelf. His softness and calmness in speaking, his gentleness with the text, his ethics.

0.4

Once daniel told me that the way he writes is by assembling a long list of examples then trying to figure out what they are examples of.

0.5

Once it rained and I had an umbrella.

1.0 SADNESS

1.1

what was a faint noise becomes all too audible.
that sound is a burial mound.
it is a song of unsettling,
of ending and descending.
i cover my ears.

1.2

wouldn't it be sad if you hiked up here
and instead of getting on the rope swing,
you pushed it for someone
who was not there.

1.3

tears like diamonds

1.4

T. Wolfe: Which of us is not forever a stranger and alone?

1.5

living, lonely, buttoned up
in invisible ways
quietly baying with distress

1.6

lush - noun; a heavy drinker, especially a habitual one.

1.7

the plight of the spectator!
oh how i hate to be sitting in the seats of the house
those on stage having encounters infinitely more intriguing and intimate
than my pitiful position in the darkness

1.8

i miss a lover i never had.

1.9

Lovers are plagued by an irreconcilable incompetence. They mistake each other for someone else, asymmetrically. Every semblance of friendship or love is fraught with misunderstandings, lying, ache. Each person is alone, or ruled by some incommunicable set of constraints that separate them from their lovers and friends. And still of out naiveté, we try to explain.

1.10

the city feels empty since your departure.

1.11

i'm glad you are really far away from me.

i'm really glad.

i will shoot down any plane that dares to bring you here.
shoot it to the fucking ground.

1.12

i will spoil everything i love on plant earth.

1.13

i know i will only be a minor character in their lives.

these gentle, elegant dancers.

do me in.

1.14

one can feel unbearably lonely

and yet

having company is boring and

or a foolish waste of time.

1.15

the only ones for me are the sad ones,

those who restlessly try to fix something.

tinker, tinker, tinker.

1.16

a kiss that grows so cold you shrink away

1.17

high school cross country meet.
loosing the trail and returning only to find the race finished hours ago.

2.0 BLOOD

2.1

i will sleep tonight on a bed of thorns. baby, you look good as a corpse.

2.2

During a talk Frederic Jameson gave at a conference at Cornell, he interrupted himself to shout, “these walls are covered in blood!” There was a pause, then he resumed his talk.

2.3

we fight a war without battlefields or fronts
distinction between war and peace blurred
violence and nonviolence cannot be untethered

2.4

In her *Pieza distinguida*, Spanish choreographer La Ribot is sprawled, naked, in a pool of blood-red paint.

2.5

a bloody hand pressed against a clear shower curtain
leaving streaks of red in its wake

2.6

ocean of blood

2.7

red pools forming on the linoleum
the gymnasiums turned into makeshift morgues

2.8

any contact with menstrual blood may result in bewitchment

2.9

Gottfried Helnwein paints, usually

bloody children
their heads covered in bandages

2.10

When Macbeth sits down to eat, the bloodied ghost of Banquo appears to him but to no one else.

2.11

incarnadine – verb; to make something blood red.

2.12

the dense, suffocating climate of darkness, blood, violated sleep
poisoned at its source

2.13

Witch's brew of Baboon's Blood:
collect the blood of a fierce monkey with long teeth.

2.14

they gave us a long sheet of plastic to cover ourselves when the blood
might burst forth from the stage.

2.15

it is at night when we are in our beds
that the vampire classically comes to call
swooning victims, their clothes all awry

2.16

throne of blood

2.17

hot blood
spilled blood
blood of guilt
stains the porcelain

2.18

blood orange

2.19

ah! poor love! your beautiful blood, such a vivid crimson.

2.20

i cut myself at the hip
for a night of blood-drenched sex

2.21

three years later she would confess to
licking the blood off the knife she had used.

3.0 GLASS

3.1

tea in a glass tea pot.
in praha we would have black black tea in a glass tea pot
with a slice of rye bread with blue cheese
every morning, breakfast was spent
watching the water slowly blacken.

3.2

light coming through the glass skylight
on the angled ceiling in the bathroom.

3.3

milk glass lamps. white. little bumps.

3.4

we would wake up early and read together in the window.
drinking chai in a glass mug.

3.5

the fogging of a glass house.

3.6

at the right time of evening
you can watch the neighbors through their windows.

3.7

apartment buildings that are made entirely of glass.
heavy curtains, permanently drawn.

3.8

"Things made of glass have no 'aura.' Glass is generally the enemy of secrets. It is also the enemy of possession."

W. Benjamin, "*Experience and Poverty*" (1933), GS II.1, 217.

3.9

the invisible barrier, or rather the glass floor of production

3.10

'For now we see through a glass, darkly.'

1 Corinthians 13:12

4.0 PARTIES

4.1 Party Invitations

4.1.1

Interactive Social Contract / Rally No. 3

Meet the new gods. Experimental beer-backed currency. Hypno software. Guaranteed sincere love and excellent sex for all attendees. All the latest propaganda techniques and cult tactics will be harnessed to achieve turbo zen at the third and unforgettable charismatic show down. Write new laws for the techno-cult at our hypno terminals. I'm your plus one.

4.1.2

comrades,

we are coming to town to smoke you out of your holes. check it: wednesday, feb. 8th. "go tell your fucking friends." believe the hype. we would love to have you.

cheers,

the PR dept

4.1.3

ALL WELCOME. Refreshments – stiff, copious – provided.

4.2 Parties

4.2.1

The party party

The party of non-partisan non-party politics

The party of slush-fund liars

The party of lost ground

The party for the continued withering of party politics

The party for total affiliation

The party for the circumvention of the party

The party for the evaporation of aims

The party for the infinite division of the party

4.2.2

A group of characters (A, B, C, D, E, F, and W) are at C's place for dinner.

4.2.3

let's be too much, every second of a never ending night. let's make each second, too loud, too fast, too hot, too close, too bright, too dark, too blurry. we want more, then twice that amount. and then we falter for a second, everyone disperses, and its gone.

4.2.4

we have to disperse and relocate immediately

they are on our heels

we hurry towards the cellar door

4.2.5

Conceptual Parties.

Have a party for an hour. For the second hour, reenact the party that just happened. For the third hour, reenact the first hour playing someone else.

Have a party for an hour which is documented by video. Watch the documentation of the first hour during the second hour.

4.2.6

function of social groups: killing time; jockeying for position in the status, hierarchy; confessional

4.2.7

The people by the door are a bit uncomfortable. Please take a moment to make yourself more comfortable. There are some chairs here in the front.

4.3 After-Parties

the sounds of a failing legitimation. of streets overturning, of cars used only as shields. distant scuffles. the whistling of leaves. a soft breeze. the best days in the city are days where everyone has forgotten about going to work. too much to do. At the window, scanning, scouring, inspecting, discussing. to the desk, discussing, discussing, writing, arguing, writing. to the street, walking, lifting, holding, pushing, waiting, waiting, leaving. going downstairs, drinking, drinking, holding, leaving.

5.0 BELATED REPLIES TO LOST ARGUMENTS

5.1

In considering gender and sexuality in relation to 'hard politics,' what is notable is the way these can mobilize people in a way that other concerns do not. Clinton had an impeachment trial while Bush never did. The 'crimes' of sexuality outweigh the 'crimes' of war.

5.2

Hedge fund traders and kindred banksters have metamorphosed into 'the financial system to be saved' and hence 'the economy' itself.

5.3

In response to the contention that the board of directors must be compensated for their managerial labor as workers do not have the training to be able to manage an enterprise: managerial labor is everywhere – mothers, social movements, organizers. It is only the management of capital that is compensated. The bulk of managerial labor is unwaged.

6.0 RHETORICAL MOVES

6.1 Thinking

6.1.1

Think in units of debates. Rather than simply taking a position, note the debate between two positions. This way, you can watch debates play out. You can be on the look out for exchanges which reveal a debate. You can also mark events within a debate and name them things like 'the ____ turn, the ____ question, the ____ problem.' or mark beginnings and endings within a debate with names like 'the death of the [author]' or 'the advent of [modernity].'

6.1.2

Deconstruction: take something that looks coherent and show that it is internally incoherent; dwelling within *A* is non-*A*. I looked up at the ceiling of a room on the third floor of ABC No Rio and saw that someone had drawn a picture of a book titled 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism.'

Oppose a thinker against herself:

Saving 2010: Thinking with Olive against Olive.

Saving 1968: Thinking with Habermas against Habermas

Learn how to see not only internal oppositions, but also *A* inside of *B*, *A* hiding in *B*, *A* wearing a coat of *B*. *The commodity takes the form of its opposite.*

6.1.3

Take a contest between two terms and add a third which trumps the former two: *The radicals and the state lose to aesthetics.*

6.1.4

Watch writers cut and run with each other's ideas and perhaps try to chart it. *X* takes this straight from *Y*'s (very *Z*-ist) reading of *W* in ___, and it is part of *Y*'s theory of the ___, which she developed further in ___ (not yet translated). [Zizek takes this straight from Althusser's (very Spinozist) reading of Pascal in *Ideology and the State Apparatuses*, and it is part of Althusser's theory of the materiality of ideology, which he

developed further in other (recently published) texts such as "Machiavelli and Us", "Marx in his limits", and "Philosophy and Marxism."]

6.1.5

Spinoza: I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn human actions, but to understand.

6.1.6

In organizing a set of ideas or works, one can use several organizational schemes: by theme (literary and philosophical works on alienation), by person (the dances of Trisha Brown), by time (Roof Shingle Design, 1845-47), and by place (Quilting in Durham). The axes of space and time, horizontality and verticality.

6.1.7

The power of metonymy. In Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, the term 'invisible hand' appears once in the thousand pages of text.

6.1.8

Examine a place as an event, a thing as a process.

6.1.9

Marxist methodology. Whenever an explanatory reason is invoked, you know another reason dwells elsewhere. The invocation of a rule serves the purpose of concealing the reason at play.

6.1.10

Take it to the Next Level.

6.2 Reading

6.2.1

To encounter a text. Encounter variously means 'to meet as an adversary; to confront in battle, assail;' 'to meet, fall in with;' 'to meet with, experience (difficulties, opposition, etc.);' 'to face resolutely;' 'to go to meet;' and 'to accost, address.' Encounters may be hostile, fraught, ambivalent, pleasurable, transcendent, or some combination thereof. One can sit so excited, so excited, so excited, waiting for a reconstruction of a dance that has not been performed since 1971 to begin. One can be

destroyed, torn asunder, by a work. One can tremble with the fear of a piece never ending. One can love these encounters, the problems posed by them, how much there is to say, how peculiar the whole apparatus is.

6.2.2

Read with a set of commitments. Not that these don't shift and change, but one has a project. The stakes are high.

Education is the ability to contextualize and historicize your own commitments.

6.2.3

Notice when a writer is playing a different role in the text, wearing a different hat. *In this passage, he is putting on his accounting hat.* Have different hats as a reader: your temporal hat, your safari hat, your poetic hat.

6.3 Writing

6.3.1

Making distinctions with elegance. Take an idea (the other, the outside, whatever) and modify it by someone's name. Olive's outside, not Luther's. A second method is to use the same word but in a different part of speech, for instance the distinction between politics and the political (e.g. The political is the constituent tensions of a society and politics is the kind of concepts generated by those tensions). You can also do something with capitalization: *must we not have a distinction between theory and Theory?* You make up different ways of saying the words so they sound different, or use different gestures to use when you are saying them.

6.3.2

Take a well-known phrase and swap out one word. *Where have all the explosions gone?*

Take a well-known phrase and chop it down to size. I saw a tattoo on S. D.'s arm that read *All that is solid...*

6.3.3

Take two words and repeat them with other words sandwiched between. *Hell yeah? Hell to the fuck yeah.*

Steven “all team player” Zultanksi. Steven “no pipes” Zultanski

6.3.4

Theory is making much out of a little, the ability to make connections between a detail and an encompassing social logic. Amplify and magnify what is at stake.

Don’t call this our ‘third issue.’ No, let’s just call it like it is: a force of destabilization and deterritorialization.

6.3.5

Use cinematic cuts when making an argument. Leave a scene, a character, a problem somewhere and skip to something else. *We will meet up with Merton and Scholes a little later.*

6.3.6

Restate something to create a moment of risible redundancy. B.G. told a story which involved a sign that read, 'Here lives the rabbit. The rabbit lives here.'

Sam is a person who cooks and also likes to cook.

6.3.7

Add 'o's to things. *Anarcho-anarchism. Communo-communism. Historico-historicity. Corporeo-corporeality. Architecto-architecture. Catheo-cathedral. Streeto-street. Bedsidetabo-table. Olive-o-olive.*

6.3.8

Double metaphor. Connect a metaphor to two different referents.

Priests among priests. Cops among cops. The trots and administration are hand in glove.

6.3.9

Layer cultural logics atop of one another. In this interview I transcribed, John Jasperse ran through a long list of personalities, bands, fashionistas, rappers, Baroque composers, and so on in explaining his costume choice of covering his dancers in doilies.

6.3.10

Take three semi-unrelated things and act like they are generally known to have so much to do with each other. *This has become a catalyst for a much*

more serious discussion about the relationship between death, the University and modern capitalism.

6.3.11

In titling something, make the part before the colon much longer than the part after the colon. *The Frankfurt School's Interest in Freud and the Impact of 'Eros and Civilization' on the Student Protest Movement in Germany: A Brief History*

6.3.12

Take someone's name and make it into as many parts of speech as possible. Invite me to this party: Readings for the evening will include *How James Joyce Became Joycean* (on Joyce, the Late Joyce, and the Future Joycean), the Joycean psychedelic epic *James Joyce Barefoot in Joyce's Head*, and *On the Metalanguage of Joyceanism*. Photocopies of texts will be made available at the screening.

6.3.13

Write as if one were in a different setting. Swap contexts – from a seminar to a sportscast to a rock and roll show to a support group. At the bottom of a formal letter of invitation, add: *And if there are any ladies left in the crowd, don't worry—we still do menstrual blood tincture rituals.*

6.3.14

Avant-criticism.

Think compositional and formally about doing criticism.

6.3.15

Add as many details as possible. Give thought a space, a time, a bodily experience to emerge from. *He had this thought while eating a sushi boxed lunch on a bullet train in japan coming from a Lexis factory and hearing about conflict in the middle east. She made the decision while preparing a pot of tea in an attic bedroom in Kentucky staring out at a yard of weeds and thinking about everyone who had betrayed her.*

6.3.16

Self Parody. Do too much of what you think you want to do. Make it ambiguous which is your work and the parody of your work. Attempt to

resemble a caricature, a cartoon of yourself. A tagger who writes 'Don't Tag.'

6.3.17

Combine formal speech with informal utterances.

Three Songs of Lenin—Like we loved him

It's fucking on with the commodity form, the state form and everything else!

6.3.18

Use *we* instead of *I*. You will feel less lonely.

6.3.19

Overly state either one's intelligence or stupidity.

We didn't fall off—we're back and more ignorant than ever.

The contributions range from our usual stunning genius to our harrowing brilliance.

6.3.20

In poetry, you don't have to use all of the words.

Look, you can just cross ~~these ones~~ out.

6.3.21

Categorize types of responses. You can do this in terms of content: *People tend to fall into two groups in relation to this idea.* Also in terms of the form of response: clarification, elaboration, disagreement, and so on.

6.3.22

Name a certain mode of response and then unveil a more thoughtful or complex reply.

The one-liner response would be 'that's not a pipe! It is a picture of a pipe.'

The trivial point would be...

6.3.23

State something and then take it back or find someway of nullifying the need to have mentioned it in the first place.

I would say I should spend less time in cemeteries, but we both know that would be saying only and that I don't mean it anyway.

There is a bank, about which there is nothing to say, other than it crouches and sweats whitely and that it must be burned.

6.4 Talking

6.4.1

My current research is on x (some subject, contemporary art, biopolitics, what-have-you). I will talk about it next week, but first, let's discuss y (some other subject, neoliberalism, botany). Everyone came to hear about subject x . And each week, subject x is deferred and subject y is discussed. Over time, y becomes x . We are astonished.

6.4.2

Anticipating the opposition: *I knew that you would ask this question. I must admit that I have prepared an answer.*

6.4.3

State the timing of things to avoid restlessness: *okay, now we're going to listen to a song. it is two minutes and forty nine seconds.*

6.4.4

There is a certain type of dinner table conversation that has little to do with content. More important is motif and the ability to pick up motifs, play them off each other, and make a composition out of it. For example, you take the first five things said – warm bread, seeing a lightning bug, coast of Oregon, being tired, kelp – and you attempt to combine them in the most novel and timely ways.

6.4.5

Historical reference can be used as an intimidation tactic. Learning the history of something can at least prevent someone psyching you out for not knowing it. It can also tame one's historical audacity.

David Graeber: Well, yes, as you can see, I always try to put things in long-term perspective. One of the vices of academia, and to some degree it washes over into the intellectual life of social movements, is this obsession with rupture, this giddy presentism, this absolute assumption that whatever is happening now is utterly new and unprecedented and marks a fundamental break with the rest of history and human experience. At this point it grows genuinely tiresome. (in an interview with Yiannis Aktimon)

6.4.6

Censorship as Promotion: *Do you see this? Don't look at it!*

Denouncing something often has the effect of increasing its circulation.

6.4.7

If you are making 'Art' or something that no one really knows about besides the few friends that are kind enough to ask you about it, act like it is an international force slicing through the totality of the social.

6.4.8

Take something whose main subject is widely known, and how show the text is about everything other than what it is known for. Richard Dienst made the claim that there is not much in *The Coming Insurrection* about armed insurrection. Horror movies as being about everything other than horror.

6.4.9

Specify the criteria of good taste, the knowing of when you have an excellent specimen of something. *Like all good graves, it's smaller than you'd think, and at least partially in shadow.*

Specify the criteria for when something adequately plays its role, the boundaries of a specific category.

Like any good spy, a spy gives a report.

Any decent French marxist would deconstruct the film as a critique of the idle and excessive aristocracy.

6.4.10

Insist on calling someone by a different name of your choosing.

I will call you Julius.

6.4.11

When introducing a work or paper, explain the conditions of how it originated, why you wrote the paper. This envelopes the audience in a project. They are here with you to help in the process and unfolding, not to mince you to fine pieces.

6.4.12

Name someone long dead a posthumous follower of someone alive after them. *Marx was a Sraffian.*

Put a concept into someone's mouth that they do not have access to historically. *Freud had not yet found his body without organs.*

7.0 FARAWAY PLACES

7.1

spaces and/have mythologies

we are not simply in a certain space

we become immersed in a narrative, a way of speaking, a plan.

7.2

occupying spaces produces subjectivity.

you don't know what it feels like until you do it.

occupy everything.

7.3

The epicenter is the city of T. where the landscape is tightly knit, decadent, explosive.

7.4

take me to a banal space, a gym in the basement of a church lined with metal bleachers, and turn it into a world of dancing ponies, false virgins, and overwhelming sound.

7.5

opening doors to rooms

not knowing what will happen

many things are uncertain

possible/charming

7.6

yachts, prisons, lobbies, public baths, sanatoria, street fairs, experimental communities, Salvation Army shelters, working-class teashops

7.7

Franco Moretti: Geography is not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history 'happens,' but an active force that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth.

7.8

canonical spaces of modernity: the metropole, the cafe, the train station, the coterie salon or country house

7.9

cities you have lived in

cities you visit at regular intervals

cities you long for but will never visit

cities you could not find even if you went to them

cities that will destroy you

7.10

the degree to which spaces can host or cultivate various stripes of political, economic, interpersonal, or poetic encounters.

7.11

to feel held by a space

this space, this room, this city, this night

have arms that hold dear

7.12

a rope ladder hanging from the tree led not a tree house, but to a high branch next to which someone had nailed a small shelf into the trunk.

7.13

houses made of vertical wood.

houses made of earth and straw.

houses made of sand and water.

houses made of cards.

hobbit houses.

7.14

attic bedroom

candles hung on wires throughout the room

lying down
the rain sounds as if it will land
on your cheeks.

7.15
coastal fog ! coastal fog ! coastal fog !

7.16
empty factories
empty galleries
walls pipes doors ceilings windows
white grey black

8.0 FOES AND FELLOWS

8.1 Enemies

8.1.1

Self-Appointed Advisers: Those who respond to any feeling or problem by telling you what to do to resolve it, completely uninvited. Those who cannot tolerate affect, process, or struggle. Those who seek to pacify desire, tension, war machines. Those who never allow themselves to admit to angst.

8.1.2

Massifiers: Those who use grand categories to reduce an encounter to something they can master with brazen ease. Those who have no problems.

8.1.3

Dainty-hearted Evaders: Those who are too soft, too delicate, too novel to engage with the politics that traverses their position in the relations of production and reproduction.

[Orwell: In our age there is no such thing as 'keeping out of politics.' All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia. - *Politics and the English Language*]

8.1.4

Dilettantish Sloppies: Those who causally dabble in some activity for leisure's sake with no commitment or drive to engage with its context, its

history, its specificity. Those for whom rigor is a faint memory before the narcosis of leisure. Those for whom play lacks any dimension of seriousness or weight.

8.1.5

Utopia's Planning Officials: Those who claim that we must plan and design what is to come. Those who declare that we must know what we want, not what we are against. Those for whom desire is knowable and has a fixed object. Those who never change their minds once they have something they once thought was desirable. Those who are disconnected from and dismissive of the processes and protagonists of transformation. Those who thwart the movement of desire and territorialize it in 'design groups.'

8.1.6

Apologists: Those shameless defenders of boredom, repression, and the non-event.

Apologist *W*: *Oh man, what idiots, they are doing it totally wrong.* It is unacceptable to sit from the safety of one's laptop and tell others what they should have done in the street, consuming a social movement like a sitcom, making fun of those who are trying something, those who are taking over buildings. Have you tried occupying a building? Have you faced the situation of hundreds of police ready to hit you? Sure, things could have been done differently. Doing these sort of actions has no playbook, no leadership. There is an action. We reflect, we learn. Critical comments should be focused on supporting a movement rather than deflating it.

Apologist *X*: *Those _____ (white, male, privileged, or other identity category) kids do not have the right to do such bullshit.* This move focuses on someone's identity to avoid engaging with the ideas and politics at hand. Emphasizing someone's identity, personal history, or character skirts around examining the content of their positions. Would you prefer that privileged white kids just study finance and be investment bankers rather than trying to use their positionality for strategic political ends?

8.1.7

Liberals: Yeah, brah. Let's create social change. We really like to making our voices heard at the polls. Better yet, let's go vote and send a letter to our congress person and buy some local produce and put our bottles in

the recycling bin. Green jobs! Hallelujah! Pacifism! Respecting Mama Gaia, connecting with higher powers, feeling our spiritual energies. Voting! Shopping! Nonviolence! Non-profits! Fuck yeah, I love non-profits. I love how non-profits help meet the needs of our community. I love community, especially the kind of community I feel at the church coffee hour. Man, that feels good, eating coffee cake after raising our voices together in gratitude for creation. I think about coffee hour a lot, especially when I am at the farmer's market buying berries for the coffee cake. I love meeting my neighbors.

8.1.8

Zombies: Those who walk around in dead forms, looking to suck the life of the living. Those who go to a demo, a performance in order to repeat the last one. Those who are already dead.

8.1.9

Inverse Flakery: Those who rescind invitations. They do not call and say *they* are not coming; they call and tell *you* not to come.

8.1.10

Careerists: Those who internalize the commodity form of labor and actively reproduce themselves as a 'professional,' in total earnestness. Those who take the game of professionalism at face value, as something more than rampant fraudulence. Those who reduce any project, task, or desire into the advancement of a 'career,' a form they think still exists amidst the widespread precarization of work.

8.2 Friends

8.2.1

Rigorous Greenhorns: Those who do not have a background in a certain medium yet develop a fervent interest. This may progress such that they begin to participate in the production and the discourse of the field.

8.2.2

Welcoming Committees: Those who anticipate your arrival and make special arrangements that reveal a careful attention to your fancies. Placing on the table a bowl of tomatoes freshly clipped from the garden.

Bringing home a lime in case you fancy a drink. Preparing a bed with fresh sheets. Arranging the articles on the desk just so.

8.2.3

Textually-mediated Loves: Those who read the books you like to a) pick up your interests, b) attempt to decipher you.

8.2.4

Indirect Admirers: Those who may be aloof in your presence but who, you have been informed, harbor a great deal of affection and admiration for you. This information can only arrive second hand.

8.2.5

Center of the Whirlwinds: Those who are the rowdiest at the party/demo. Those who won't leave until all the action is decidedly over. Those who leave a wake of clamor and vehemence. Those who throw parties for the sole purpose of fighting the cops.

8.2.6

Courtly Addressers: Those who make a deliberate gesture of greeting. Perhaps with an urbane formality or old-fashioned air. Perhaps with an embrace that tackles you to the floor.

8.2.7

Corporeal Scholars: Those who without prompting start pawing you, your shoulders, your IT band, your back, finding the lovely details of your connective tissue. Those who can touch the contours of your body and know what ails you without verbal explanation.

8.2.8

Slow Wave: Those that are willing to sit down and be slow and thoughtful in a situation that might be considered too loud or too fast. Those that are willing to ask for the time and concentration to attend to something subtle. The kids that pull out their acoustic guitars, sit on the floor, and sing old songs while a loud party echoes down the hall. Those who shoot daggers at the loud vulgar kids.

8.2.9

Farce and Nubbery: Those who nub out and farce around. Those who repeatedly make unfortunate miscalculations, misinterpretations, misjudgments. Those whose trajectory is a parade of mistakes and failures.

9.0 SITUATIONS

9.1

Gather the same group of people together for twenty-six round table discussions on the same topic.

9.2

A citation wall: a wall where everyone posts their position on a certain subject daily.

9.3

Someone gives a talk and the audience subsequently tries to describe what has occurred and makes an outline collectively of what was said.

9.4

A talk that is composed of a person recounting a set of anecdotes and past arguments. Three projects, topics, trajectories that a speaker jumps recklessly between.

9.5

A mailing list in which everyone has a specific conversational function.

9.6

Sitting in rows, you cannot entertain yourself by looking at the other spectators. This is why we should be in the round.

9.7

An event in which those involved continually describe the event as it is happening. A attempt to merge the event-in-itself with the event-for-itself.

10.0 REST

10.1

a bowl of wild berries on the kitchen table in the evening. the window is half open. i can hear the crickets outside.

10.2

alone in the illuminated basement. set the needle on the lp. the rest of the city maybe be in darkness. but down here, i am in the center of luminosity.

10.3

I.'s Research Interests: presence, oblivion, the concrete, lover's love, peasants, landscape. not bothering to collect herself into '19th century British literature' or 'paleobotany' or 'beer.'

10.4

Judy Gerowitz hereby divests herself of all names imposed upon her through male social dominance and freely chooses her own name, Judy Chicago.

10. 5

– es-tu une militante?
– oui, je pense.

10.6

on the first of the month, everything can begin again.

10.7

this is why we don't fear opening a total war.

10.8

make sure you feel groovy before it starts.

10.9

come, you come too.

10.10

astonished youths come of age.

10.11

a theory of beauty: effort in the face of impossibility and inevitable failure. a cardboard bridge between two apartment buildings

10.12

look. they painted a road for you in berlin.

10.13

tomorrow at 4am, find someone who believes that she is destroyed and then convince her that she is not. if she tells you to take a hike, then take *her* on a hike. if she tells you to go to hell, then *drag her* down with you.

10.14

stay at the swimming hole forever. we'll never be alone.

10.15

the evenings are slowing down. stacks of books, the quiet, the steam from the mug. more than anything, there are pauses and there is rain. the rain will do nothing for the hopeless garden. now, more than ever before, things are unravelling. it is nearly time to move away again. moving away at least gives a semblance of throwing the old ghosts off track. they will inevitably return. but for a while, the nights will be calm, without apparitions.

10.16

some days you wake up and find yourself in a cemetery.

10.17

the door sways open,
with ease, softly

10.18

we are foolish, incompetent, incomplete.
not all of the proper elements
are present. something is amiss.
but one tries, one collects, one learns.
in the shower, i say the day's date aloud to myself.

ON OCTOBER THE EIGHTH

On October 8th, 2009, a group of people sat down together.

On October 8th, 2009, a group of people came to Flux Factory in New York and sat together.

On October 8th, 2009, a thursday, an audience assembled on 29th street.

In October on a thursday, an uncertain number of people sat and looked at each other in a building on a street in a city.

On October 8th, 2009, an audience thought about itself.

On an autumn evening, a group of people came together and wanted to stay together.

On a thursday, an audience assembled and tried something, which no one could exactly identify or articulate what it was.

On a day rife with promise and danger, a group of people realized they had changed, realized they were changing, that this moment would later become an event, a crystal in time a moment with a before and an after.

At Flux Factory on October 8, 2009, a group of poets, a group of mystics, a group of militants, met to discuss what can be done when nothing can be done.

On October 8, 2009, a group occupied a space and decided they would never be alone again.

On a brisk night in a gray city, splendid tournaments were held.

On October 8, 2009, blood ran down our cheeks, trickling down our legs.

On a thursday evening, we were, of course, utterly in love.

DE TE FABULA NARRATUR !

1.

On page 90 of *Capital Vol. 1*, Karl Marx cites a line from Horace's *Satires* 'De te fabula narratur!' which translates as 'The tale is told of you.'

2.

A few months ago, I ushered for a dance performance at the joyce. I had the task of helping people find their assigned seats. *Let's go to F-9 or A-113.* I became captivated by the movement dynamics that were going on: the task of getting a couple hundred people into a grid of numbers and letters, the movement of everyone trying to find their seat, the nonchalant complexity of all the bodies together, the causal, task-directed determination of the audience to get themselves into the right space. As the lights dimmed for the performance, I thought to myself, 'I could go home right now: the dance is already over.'

the audience already as the dance
a dance immanent to the ticket
ticket as event score

3.

With the onset of the greatest crisis capitalism has seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s, a bizarre distinction emerged in the daily discourse on the subject, the distinction between "wall street" and "main street." This distinction seems to separate finance from daily life, from the 'real' economic processes that we depend upon. The implication of this main street / wall street distinction seems to be that there is 'real capital' (i.e. the kind of stuff that can be felt with one's body) and 'imaginary capital' (i.e. stuff that is invented out of nowhere). What is concealed by this formulation is the ways in which capitalism has always involved imaginary, fictitious, ghostly presences. The tension between the symbolic and the material is one of the constituent relations in commodities, money, and economic exchange. Beyond this, fictitious capital has very material consequences. Processes of financialization have inextricably connected us all with processes of finance capital. "Main street" businesses depended upon and rode on sub-prime mortgage lending and securitization as much as any bank. Finance capital dwells within as much as it is on outside.

The implication of this main street / wall street distinction could be read as this: *if only these ridiculous bankers who just settle down and deal with real money, if only*

they would put an end to these incomprehensible financial instruments that feather trillions of dollars out of thin air, then we could address immediate, material needs. But oh! my dear, you have mistaken immateriality and signification for the monster: exploitation and all of its accomplices.

By the millennium's end the abstract money token had itself become concrete, and the world of bonds and promissory notes between forms that Marx had described as 'fictitious capital' was becoming part of a master tale of economic life.

-Randy Martin, An Empire of Indifference: American war and the financial logic of risk management

4.

From the French *estquier* meaning 'to fix,' a ticket is about a process of fixing. A ticket is like making a promise or a contract. When you buy a ticket for my dance, I promise to do the dance. When I say I am going to do a handstand, I will do a handstand. A ticket is about futurity, about what is to come, about the ability to make promises. A ticket stands for my claim on someone else's labor, my ability to make demands on the labor of the performer. As we remember from Nietzsche, the ability to make promises must be burned into the body with pain. Everybody wants to be a [contractualist].

The French word *billet* can be used for both tickets and currency notes. What sort of economic logic is at play in the ticket stub? Is it a form of finance capital - a symbol for the money the audience member spent and the performer receives? Is it, more simply, a form of money, a universal equivalent of the labor embodied in other commodities, which acquires its own social force?

I paid \$25 and the dancers just laid on stage. The piece was awful. Ridiculous waste of money.
or

I hate my audience. They just sit there lazily and watch me work, always asking too much of me.

4.5.

In a recent choreography by Regina Roche, she placed a plate of cupcakes on a table and said she was later going to give them to the audience. Towards the end of the piece, she flopped her belly over the table, crushing all of cupcakes and smearing their pink frosting all over her shirt.

5.

Immanent choreography, dances that are not about something.

They do not represent characters, events, or situations that are not present. However, there is no escape from representation. Pure presence is impossible.

A choreography of context. Let's look everywhere but the stage— the venue, the space, the seats, the tickets, the audience members, the program... Not to transcend the immediate circumstances to think about something else, but to concern ourselves with precisely these circumstances. What are the politics of what is going on right now?

With determination,
o.

[This text was prepared for a dance of the same title that was performed in New York and San Francisco. It has two forms: a collaboration with K. S. + six dancers and a solo.]

OLIVE TELLS YOU EIGHT THINGS.

“hey”

1. The three sisters in Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*

There are these three sisters in the film. One of them is dying and she's on her death bed making these awful wheezing noises. The other two sisters stand across the room from her, dressed up in elegant frocks and never come within twenty feet of the bed. They just stare at her without saying anything before leaving the room.

2. Space Lagoon.

The main dance studio where I went to college had this light gray floor. Before a dance performance, they would put on these 'work' lights which meant an ambient blue light from overhead. The way the blue light fell on the gray floor made it so that you could not see the edges of the room if you were sitting in the middle of the space. I privately called this the Space Lagoon because I felt to be inhabiting a space of abstract dimension.

3. Hey. Look at this.

This is a photo of a polar bear standing on its back legs and waving its front arm when our boat floated by it. You might have to come closer to see it.

4. There is no outside and there is also no inside.

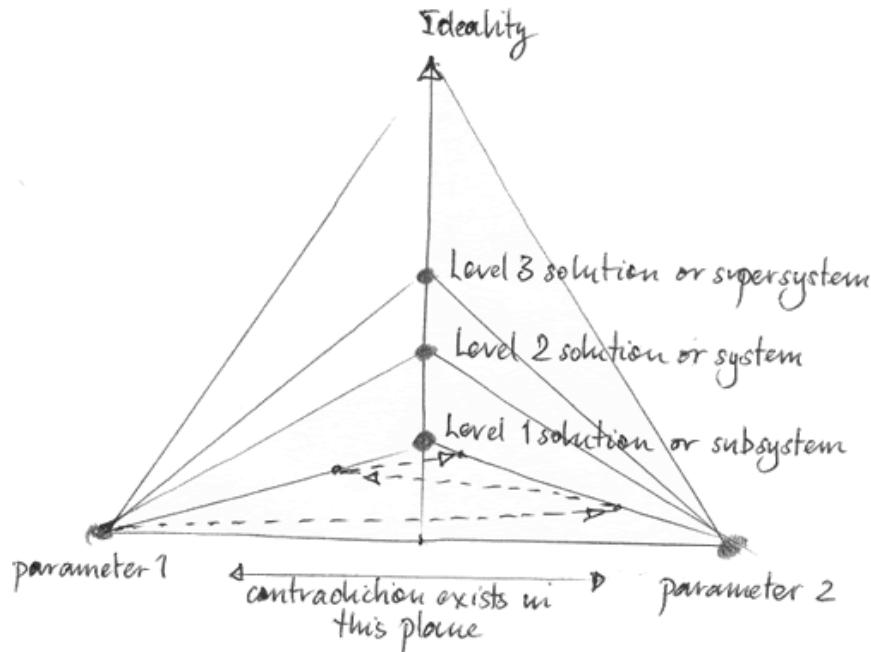
Claire Pentecost made this point in a talk she gave a few months ago. She showed a photo of an american flag that she had draped over a worm bin that the worms were slowly decomposing. There is no outside to capitalism in that everyone alive is touched by its expansion and colonization of social and environmental resources. But there is also no inside to capitalism, no way to play totally by the rules. The notion of a normal job has evaporated. It has become impossible to live within the normative narrative of working and consuming.

5. He is fresh and everyone else is tired.

6. Consider your spine.

Take a moment and notice the position of your spine. Stack your shoulders on top of your hips. Roll the shoulders a few times then relax them down, away from your ears. Take a breath. On the inhale, lengthen the spine from the sitz bones up to the crown of your head. On the exhale, shift the head slightly to make sure you are not gripping around the neck.

7. This really illustrates the contradiction.



8. Political Strategy

The task is not to plan a future society or to build a party capable of enacting some sort of transformation. Rather, the task is to create and elongate moments of communization. Not all at once, such-and-such space, such-and-such practice. To act as if the revolutionary moment has already happened and we are wandering in the aftermath.

[This was prepared as a powerpoint presentation that was performed at the flux factory, new york. K. started to tackle me halfway through and I gave the rest of the talk fighting off the weight of her body.]

BE WARY !

Be wary of this bullshit about art saving lives, cities, and other claims made by the henchmen of capital.

SLOGANS FOR IMMEDIATE DISSEMINATION

Play the periphery. Unseat the king.

Sit in an invisible cathedral.

Don't gaze me bro!

Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. -St. Augustine

Sit Closer.

Storm the Castle. Castle the Storm.

Various factions claim to be or accuse each other of being: academic; occultist; avant-garde; proletarian; or revolutionary.

SANTIAGO SIERRA IS FRESH AND MARINA ABRAMOVIC IS TIRED: A BRIEF EXPLANATION

There is a similarity in the sort of performance constraints used by contemporary artists Sierra and Abramovic: a specified duration in which a body will be in a certain space and perform a certain action -- often longer than is considered comfortable, usually without much talking, often sitting, or standing, or doing fairly simple things. Abramovic performs her own work, sometimes with collaborators. Or sometimes her work is re-performed by dancers. Usually thin people in art galleries. The conditions of these relations are rarely made explicit – how much the performers are paid, the conditions of the contract, and so forth. Her whole apparatus is cloaked in a sort of phenomenologo-mysticism - presence, reduction to experience, *epoqué*, the body, its boundaries, its potentiality.

Sierra, on the other hand, rarely performs his own pieces. He hires poor people to be in his work, often immigrants, people who are desperate for money. He makes the economic relation between himself and his performers explicit by including the term 'remunerated person' in the titles of his pieces and usually noting how much he has paid the person in the description of a work.

Abramovic gallivants her subjectivity around like it is something special, like something transcendent is happening in her pieces. When you sit across a table from her, it will be categorically unlike any other time you have sat across from someone, because she is an Artist. What goes unstated is the reliance of her work and her special artistic subjectivity upon a range of other unannounced performers, namely cops. In her performance of *The Artist is Present* at the MOMA, security guards protected the space that had been taped off as part of the 'art.' If anyone stepped into this space, they would be tackled by the 'security' mercenaries, which happened on numerous occasions. The presence of the security guards, their performance in the protection of the commodity form of art, was framed as outside the piece, an externality to the constraints of the performance. This allowed viewers to have mystical connections, to feel Abramovic's energy, to bracket the social world and be present with 'Art.'

Sierra deliberately undermines the performance of some kind of special artistic subjectivity and the fantasy of being able to bracket broader social

relations from the aesthetic experience. He offers whatever subjectivities – the man on the street, the worker, the immigrant, the impoverished, the mass of faces, the mass of flesh – instead of the Artist. Rather than feeling an unadulterated 'presence,' Sierra's viewers are more likely to be profoundly ashamed, to be disgusted with themselves and art galleries which enable situations of humiliatingly useless toil. Sierra's work reminds its audience that that they are in culture, that they are in capitalism traversed by its racialized logics. Don't think that an art gallery is any different a sweatshop, a brothel, a marketing firm. Here as elsewhere, we are faced with the logic of capital and its demands on our bodies, our time, our lives.

We don't get anywhere by leaving, by trying to go to somewhere else, to some special or alternative space. This is a trap. To think that we have left, that we are in an autonomous domain is a fantasy. The logics (of capital, of race, of gender) will surface. These forces are not invincible, and our lives are full of moments of communization, of being together, of singularity. But let us be wary. Let us be vigilant. Rather than leaving, let us try to be here, be present – with security guards, pointless jobs, commodities, war. Let us watch bodies face the humiliatingly useless conditions of work. Anti-utopia. Presence sans mysticism. Presence avec disgust. May the new world emerge from the collective retching of our nausea.

CON (- CEPTUAL) ARTIST: STATEMENTS VEILED AS QUESTIONS WHICH DISPLAY MY DISTASTE FOR TINO SEHGAL

Tino Sehgal had an exhibition of two pieces - *Kiss* and *This Progress* - at the Guggenheim, January 29th through March 10th 2010. I stood outside for an hour on a frigid Friday evening in February to get in to the museum for free. I worked - unpaid - as Sehgal's artist assistant. In the fall, we would go out for a drink in the east village and he would tell me about the process. He returned to Brussels before the exhibition opened, so I went to see the work without him. I can make the following remarks, thinly disguised as questions, from my perspective and commitments as a dancer.

Expansion of the Commodity-Form of Art¹

In the post-readymade and post-Judson era, contemporary art and dance increasing become 'whatever' practices. An artist can offer 'whatever' as their artwork - some dirty sweater found on the street, something invisible. Dancers too can present 'whatever' as their work - bodies doing something or nothing on stage, people talking, something moving or not moving. What artists produce is not some specialized object that is "art" or a specialized event that is "dance." Rather they produce themselves as "artists" or "dancers," a designation that allows whatever they do or make to be viewed as "art" and "dance." In this context, there is not a clean or solid distinction between "art" and "not-art" or between media. It has become impossible to examine a work and find some properties within it that make it "visual art" or "dance." The pertinent distinction is between the "artist" and the "non-artist" as subjects. Tino's works reflect the 'whatever' status of contemporary art such that two people making out or strangers having a conversation about 'progress' can be sold as a commodity on the art market. Does this opening of art to the 'whatever' indicate the transgression of boundaries, or rather does it indicate the voracious expansion of the commodity-form such that more and more things - experiences in time and space, interactions between people - can be bought, sold, and speculated upon?

¹ I am indebted to Marina Vishmidt's recent work on the relation between the commodity form of art and the commodity form of labor. She gave a paper at the Historical Materialism conference that I have been pouring over. Read her articles where you can find them. Her analysis will keep you up at night.

Hierarchy between Media

While the contemporary era is a largely a post-medium, post-disciplinary period, this is not to say that it is irrelevant what terms, contexts, or institutions are invoked around a specific person or work. The identification with either "visual art" or "dance" in terms of self-description or institutional framing becomes relevant when considering issues of political economy and gender. The visual arts are significantly better funded than dance. Flows of finance capital circulate around works of visual art in ways that the dance field can barely imagine. Additionally, the contemporary dance community largely consists of women and queer folks, whose practices have historically been devalued next to the great parade of men marching through the museums and galleries of yesteryear. In the context of this economic and gendered hierarchy between media, how can one assess the decision of Sehgal to contextualize his work within visual art institutions?

The Proper Name of the Artist

Both pieces presented at the Guggenheim could be easily restaged by someone else in the same or a different context. While two re-stagings may look identical and indistinguishable to a viewer, they may or may not be identified as works by Sehgal. The only thing that marks the authenticity of the work / performance / experience is the stamp of Sehgal's name, the statement that "This is a work by Tino Sehgal." What are the consequences and implications of marking a proper name on an experience? How does Sehgal produce himself as having a *je ne sais quoi* for which a collector or institution must pay dearly for a performance that could easily be produced by someone else? Additionally, how does one account for the labor of the 'interpreters' and assistants who remain nameless and uncredited while their efforts and presence bring the work into existence?

Event and Representation

Sehgal forbids any recording of his works with photography, video, or forms of written documentation. Does this decision reflect an allegiance to performance as an essentially fleeting medium that can not be supplemented by the endurance of documentation, or does it reflect a marketing tool to increase the degree of scarcity of his work? Does it function in a similar way to the allure of the unrepresented oddity behind the curtain at the carnival, drawing ever more curious spectators? Is it possible to eliminate any representation or mediation of the event of his work?

Methods of Compensation

Sehgal's sells his 'constructed situations' as art objects which can be acquired by museums or collectors. How does one buy a situation that exists momentarily between people? One can buy the right to enact one of his works under Sehgal's name and supervision. *Kiss* is owned by the MOMA, which was loaned to the Guggenheim for the duration of six weeks. If one is close enough to the dancers performing *Kiss*, one can hear them say every so often, "Tino Sehgal, *Kiss*, 2002, MOMA, New York," which specifies who 'owns' the work. In what ways does this method of compensation differ from paying a dance company for a six week performance run? Does it invent a new commodity - the objecthood or intellectual property of a performance - that must be paid for in addition to the costs and artist fees of producing any other kind of performance?

Newness and Oldness

Since the 1960s, there has been a proliferation of practices and discourses in both dance and visual arts that one can contextualize Sehgal within. In dance, there has been the incorporation of pedestrian movement, untrained dancers, performance installation, site-specificity, theatrical techniques, and a conceptual turn in which dancers chose text or talking over movement as a choreographic methodology. The visual arts have also expanded through the discourses of conceptualism, dematerialization, relational aesthetics, performance, and happenings. In what ways does Sehgal relate to these histories and modes of inquiry that have occupied groups of artists and dancers since the 1960s? What is new?

Kissing and Progressing

In considering the specificity of the works themselves, what does one make of the situations constructed at the Guggenheim? How can one respond to seeing two attractive, sleekly dressed young people assuming the positions of making out or to having a brief, disjointed conversation about "progress" with successively older people while walking around in a fancy building on the Upper East side of Manhattan? What is their relationship to the other sorts of situations one would encounter inside or on the way to the Guggenheim in the surrounding neighborhood of expensive apparel stores and cafes frequented by affluent customers? Do these situations present 'new ideas,' 'challenge the viewer,' or do some of the 'hard work' that is sometimes asked of art?

MUTINY IN THE HOUSE: THE DISRUPTIVE AUDIENCE MEMBER, SARTRE AND THE GAZE

1. Prologue, or how to make off as kidnappers

I am a perpetrator of audience disruption. In February of 2007, I danced in a work that I loathed. During one of the performances, I arranged my own kidnapping. A group of people stormed the stage during the performance and swept me from the dance, out of the building, and into a get-away car. Despite the performative and prankster manner of this kidnapping, it was filed with the police as a criminal abduction, and police patrols searched for me through the night. The choreographer and the dance department of the college where the performance took place were furious and proceeded with disciplinary action against me. There was a hearing to determine whether I would be thrown out of the college, which ultimately did not resolve to expel me. The discourse surrounding this event was dominated by the assumption that disrupting a work of choreography was necessarily an unjustifiable action. But is it so?

2. Mutiny! Mutiny! Mutiny!

Perhaps one has been witness to an act of mutiny in an audience: a pie thrown at an actor, a thunderous boo that drowns out a speaker's words, a storming of the stage, a mass exodus out of an auditorium, a banner lifted from within the audience, a seizure of the microphone, a kidnapping of a performer from the stage. These are all examples of the unwelcome disruption of a performance or speech by an audience member. What does one make of such actions? Is it fitting to chastise the perpetrators of disruption in an audience or to join them?

An indignant response may resemble the following articulation: *How dare they! I've spent so much time preparing this, and they just go ahead and interrupt me. What an insult to all the hard work I've done! In a selfish, self-aggrandizing manner, they have upstaged me. Can they, at least, see the work before denouncing it? If they disagree or have opinions about what I am doing, they have every opportunity to respond after the work. And if they desire a performance of their own, they can have a turn after I have finished. These indecent people are no better than government censors who ban and interrupt any work they do not like.* The accusations here understand the act of audience disruption as irreverence, selfishness, arrogance, impatience, bigotry, and authoritarianism.

While this assessment may be accurate, are there other ways to think about audience disruption beyond this denouncement? I intend to suspend decision for a moment and interrogate what dynamics are at play when the audience interrupts the performer. Are there reasons that one may defend such behavior, even celebrate it?

3. Who we are to each other and to ourselves

I must mention that audience behavior is culturally and historically located. What is commonplace or disruptive in audience etiquette varies over time and with different circumstances. Even in the contemporary moment, cross-cultural differences may account for different behaviors in audiences: one audience may hiss, boo, or leave in the middle of a work, and this is entirely within the framework of normal audience etiquette. The type, genre, or content of a performance also has an intimate relation with an audience's behavior. While attending a southern Baptist church service, it is perfectly acceptable to interject spontaneous praises. Sport audiences often wear costumes, cover their faces with paint, drink beer, wave about flags, and loudly chant, all of which would be entirely unacceptable in another context. I do not attempt here any sort of historical survey of audience behaviors or examination of how certain conventions became culturally constituted. Bracketing both the history and cultural background of audience behavior, I address the phenomenon of disruption in general without specifying where and when particular behaviors are necessarily disruptive.

The concept of disruption supposes an expected audience that betrays the performance. If a performer does not want to be disrupted, there can be inferred some desired or expected set of behaviors about what the audience is to do: to politely listen, to delay response, to passively agree, to love, or to adore. Certainly there are performers who do not desire this sort of audience. Many groups have attempted to provoke the audience or force audience members into the scene of action. Dadaist and Futurist performance despised the neutral gaze of the audience and sought to destroy the dispassionate position of the spectator. Rather than moving the audience towards fascination or enchantment, Futurists and Dadaists incited hatred in the audience as a mechanism to preempt neutral contemplation from a passionless, bored gaze. Filippo Marinetti's Futurist manifesto "The Variety Theater" demands the introduction of surprise and confrontation within the audience:

Introduce surprise and the need to move among the spectators of the orchestra, boxes, and balcony. Some random suggestions: spread a powerful glue on some of the seats, so that the male or female spectator will stay glued down and make everyone laugh ... – Sell the same ticket to ten people: traffic jam, bickering, and wrangling. – Offer free tickets to gentlemen or ladies who are notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric...²

For Futurist performance tactics such as these, success was being hated by the audience. As Futurism exemplifies, not every piece is made to be loved, to be moving, to be respected, or to be listened to. Certain performers deliberately try to get the audience to do something else besides passively look. Other instances such as Allan Kaprow's happenings and Richard Schechner's environmental theater eliminate the spatial separation between the play and the audience. As the action happens in the midst of audience members, they must abandon neutrality and become active in the event.

These different examples point to the importance of what is expected of the audience. Disruption exists only in the discrepancy between the expected audience and the actual audience. Disruptiveness is not a property of a specific audience behavior, but a relation to the desires of the performer. Thus, the characterization of audience disruptiveness as an act of irreverence or censorship is not absolute, but must be contextualized within the assumptions of the performer.

4. I'll stand here and you'll look at me.

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space, whilst someone else is watching him and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. -Peter Brook³

This relation between the expected audience, the disruptive audience, and the broader phenomenon of performance in general rests upon the dynamics of the gaze. The simple premise of a performance is that the spectator gazes at the performer. The spectator looks, and the performer is looked at by the spectator. In describing the phenomenon of the gaze, I employ Sartre's work on the effect of the other's gaze upon the self.

² Marinetti, Filippo. "The Variety Theatre" in *Futurist Performance* by Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby. New York: PAJ Performance, 1986. Pg. 184

³ Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968. Pg. 9

For Sartre, the gaze of the other turns the self into an object. He uses the scenario of being alone in a hallway peering through a keyhole into another room. “But all of the sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me!”⁴ In this moment when I realize that I am under the gaze of the other, I become an object for the other. Prior to the surprise, I was a being-for-itself in that I experienced myself as a reflective consciousness. After the surprise, I become a being-for-others, an unreflective consciousness that exists in the field of the other. This shift fundamentally changes the access that I have to myself. While the other looks upon me, I am constituted by how the other sees me rather than how I see myself independently of the gaze: “... my nature is – over there, outside my lived freedom – as a given attribute of this being which I am for the Other.”⁵ In this moment of being under the gaze of the other, I have a deficiency of vision, and the other gains a surplus of vision. My inability to see myself extends beyond my incapacity to see my own back or to close my visual field. When the other looks upon me, he not only can see me from all sides but he constitutes me as an object. I am seen by the other in a way that I do not see myself, as Sartre states, “...the other’s existence reveals to me the being which I am without my being able to conceive it.”⁶ The gaze of the other enslaves me, as I feel alienated from my possibilities in my existence as an object for the other. The other experiences infinite freedom while I become alienated from my freedom and myself.

The effect of the gaze is the feeling of shame. I am ashamed that the other sees me better than I see myself. My relation to myself becomes mediated by the other who has more access to what I am than I do: “...the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other.”⁷ The other takes a position of advantage over me by virtue of the knowledge that the other possesses by looking at me in ways I cannot see myself:

The other *looks* at me and as such he holds the secret of my being, he knows what I *am*. Thus the profound meaning of my being is outside me, imprisoned in an absence. The Other has the advantage over me.⁸

⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: a Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Trans by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992. Pg. 349

⁵ Ibid. Pg. 352

⁶ Ibid. Pg. 473

⁷ Ibid. Pg. 302

⁸ Ibid. Pg. 473

As an object before the other's gaze, the other understands me better than I understand myself, a situation for which I am ashamed. In addition to the unavoidable feelings of fear and anguish, the gaze of the other introduces shame into my consciousness.

Sartre's analysis of the gaze becomes applicable to performance by specifying that I, the subject, am a performer and the other is the audience member. Sartre himself mentions that public performance is conditioned by the effect of the gaze of the other: "...if we happen to appear 'in public' to act in a play or to give a lecture, we never lose sight of the fact that we are looked at, and we execute the ensemble of acts which we have come to perform in the presence of the look..."⁹ The spectator looks upon the performer with a surplus of vision. From a Sartrean perspective, the audience member turns the performer into an object, enslaving her on the stage, under the lights, in the pressure of live action. The performer is ashamed under the oppressive gaze of the audience, which is in a position of pure subjectivity and infinite freedom. The phenomenon of stage fright is in anticipation of the feeling of shame that results from being under the gaze of the other. The discomfort of seeing photographs or video documentation of a performance that display unfamiliar and unexpected images reminds the performer of her escape from herself, her deficiency of vision, and subsequently her shame as an object of the gaze.

How does Sartre's understanding of shame and the gaze of the other relate to the phenomenon of disruptive audience membership? Based upon a Sartrean analysis of performance, I develop four alternative interpretations of audience disruption that make a case for why an audience would be justified in disrupting a performance. Prior to explicating these interpretations, I discuss a specific disruption of a performance that will serve as a reference point for the subsequent interpretations.

5. Doing things wrong

A historical instance of disruption is the response of audiences to Belgian theater director and choreographer Jan Fabre's work *The Power of Historical Madness* (1984). The work is a four-hour long experimental play performed by a cast of actors, dancers, and singers. Performance scholar Arnd Wesemann describes the work as a piece "in which everything was done 'wrong' that

⁹ Ibid. Pg. 375

could possibly be done ‘wrong’ in the theater.”¹⁰ Without narrative or illusionistic techniques, the work featured a set of actions performed by people who did not play characters or roles: groups of people run in place until exhaustion, a dancer performs a 50-minute long *adagio* consisting of a few classical steps facing the back wall, a woman pushed off struggles to get back on the stage while a man thwarts her attempts over a twenty minute period, two naked men wearing crowns partner dance with each other, and other such events. The duration of each action was determined by the endurance of the performers, stopping once they had reached exhaustion. *The Power of Theatrical Madness* created a-representational scenes that foregrounded bodily exertion, nudity, and homosexuality. Wesemann understands the work as an investigation of the medium of theater, “questioning theater’s very terms: duration, space, order, movement...” with a meticulous rigor and precision.¹¹ Other critics did not see this kind of elemental experimentation and instead characterized the work as devoid of substance and inconceivably boring. Theater critic from Adeline, Australia, Peter Farrell described the work as a “megapretentious piece of twaddle four and a half hours of performers standing still, smoking cigarettes, doing knee bends, smashing plates, walking about, picking each other up, taking their clothes off and so on.”¹² Premiering at the Venice Biennale in 1984, the work went on an international tour throughout 1985 and 1986.

As *The Power of Theatrical Madness* toured, vitriolic reviews accumulated, as did numerous occasions of audience disruption. While the work did not have a formal intermission, audience members were free to take breaks when they wished. The bar at the theater remained open during the entirety of the performance, and audience members could come and go as they pleased. Wesemann here describes the reaction of the audience in different theaters during the work’s tour:

As Fabre was researching the foundations of the aesthetics of theater, and while *The Power of Theatrical Madness* was enjoying a two-year world tour, tomatoes were thrown in Tokyo, and in Rome the stage was stormed. In Tel Aviv the audience protested by singing the national anthem; fights broke out

¹⁰ Wesemann, Arnd. “Jan Fabre: Belgian Theater Magician” in *The Drama Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter, 1997). Pg. 41

¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 43

¹² Harris, Samela. “Adelaide’s strange reaction to Jan Fabre’s ‘Madness’” in *The Advertiser*. March 21, 1986.

in the Royal Albert Hall of London; in France a spectator stripped and threw his clothes onto the stage.¹³

The audience at numerous theaters around the world disrupted the performance, a form of audience participation that was unwelcome by Fabre's performers. When faced with an audience that incessantly and riotously laughed through the work in *Adeline*, Australia, performer Kathinka disapproved of the audience's behavior, as she reported to a critic: "We are not joking ... We are earnest. It is all right if they laugh sometimes but not laughing continuously. Always we get some times when the audience gets silent and we get respect. But here it is continuous noise."¹⁴ Fabre himself was less disdainful of the audience's disruptions that his performers stating that audience members "are free to do what they want."¹⁵ The tactics of Fabre's audience varied from hurling projectiles, spatial penetration, acoustic intervention, and absenteeism, all of which successfully disrupted the performance. In analyzing the audience's response to *The Power of Theatrical Madness* and audience disruption in general, I identify four interpretations of this phenomenon: the enactment of shame, relief at diversion, relief at the existence of the other, and the revenge of the audience, which I discuss in turn.

6. Mutiny Pageant in four acts

Act I : Enactment of Shame

In the first interpretation, the disruption of the audience enacts the shame that the performer feels while being under the audience's gaze. From a Sartrean viewpoint, the performer does not know what he has said or what his work looks like as he becomes an object for the other and lacks the ability to see himself. He is ashamed before the audience member who was able to see the performance better than the performer himself sees his work. The disruption of the audience member effectively states, *I know what you have said better than you do, and it was not persuasive, pleasing, intelligent, desirable, beautiful, interesting ...* or whatever specific quality the performer desires. The disruption stages the shame that the performer already feels.

¹³ Wesemann. Pg. 43

¹⁴ Harris, Samela.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Sartre describes the situation of making an awkward or vulgar gesture in solitude, simply observing one's action without judgment. "But now suddenly I raise my head. Somebody was there and has seen me. Suddenly I realize the vulgarity of my gesture and I am ashamed."¹⁶ To extend this situation to performance, the presence of the audience causes the performer to realize the vulgarity and awkwardness of her actions on stage. The disruptive audience member actively reminds the person on stage of her shameful performance. In delivering tomatoes to Jan Fabre's performers, the audience member in Tokyo affirmed the shame of those on stage. Rather than receiving the fruits of one's labor, the hurled tomatoes are the fruits of one's shame.

Act II : Relief at Diversion

My second interpretation of disruptive audience membership is a relief on the part of the performer in a diverted gaze. Rather than being ashamed by the tomatoes, they produce relief in the performer. The tomato thrower ceases to be a mere spectator and becomes part of the scene. The gaze is diverted from the performer on stage and shifted towards the disruptive audience member. This relieves the performer momentarily being the sole object of the gaze, lessening its oppressive force. The performer also gains an excuse: she is allowed to not know what has happened, to not know whether her face has been splattered by a tomato, and to not know what she looks like. Her deficiency of vision and lack of knowledge about how she appears from the stage is excused by the disruption. The tomatoes relieve her of the expectation that she understands how she appears, which she does not to begin with. A number of the disruptions of Fabre's work, such as the boisterous singing of the Israeli national anthem or the Frenchmen who removed his clothes and threw them at the stage, were loud both energetically and acoustically, resulting a possible upstaging of the slow, durational nature of *The Power of Theatrical Madness*. This upstaging allows the performer to hide behind the actions of audience members, momentarily ducking out of the gaze. The temporary diversion of the gaze frees the performers of their enslavement as objects for the other.

Act III : Relief at the Existence of the Other

The third interpretation of audience disruption also suggests relief on the part of the performer but for a different reason. Instead of relief at a diverted gaze,

¹⁶ Sartre. Pg. 302

the performer is relieved that she has proof of the existence of the audience. From a phenomenological premise, one must bracket the existence of the other and begin from the assumption that one does not know whether the audience exists. This is quite plausible in a theater in which the lights glare so brightly upon the performer that she cannot see if anyone is indeed sitting in the theater. In his book *The Audience*, performance theorist Herbert Blau writes of the terrifying possibility that the audience does not exist: “There are moments, however, when the absence is unbearable because you can still hear its breathing, like the awful stench of history, which is an echo chamber of death...”¹⁷ This haunting image of the theater as a death chamber in which one can only hear and smell the echo of a bygone audience encapsulates the terror of performing for no one. The unbearable absence of a theater’s audience negates performance as such.

In order to avoid this terror, one needs to identify a phenomenon that requires the audience as an explanatory device. A disruptive act is precisely what can function as proof that the audience is in fact present. The tomato hurled and splattered upon a performer offers a phenomenological experience from which the presence of the audience can be inferred. Certainly there are other phenomena that may suggest the audience’s presence such as the sound of applause. As a predictable convention of the theater-going experience, applause may suggest the presence of the audience, but not whether they have seen the work or whether they have absent-mindedly sat and pondered techniques of tax evasion rather than paying any attention to the performance. In distinction to applause, disruption suggests that the audience is present and they have seen the work. The knowledge of the audience’s presence and engagement is thus a relief to the performer who is terrified that she may be alone in the theater. The longing for the presence of the other may far exceed the longing to be loved by the other. One would rather have any reaction than not have a spectator at all. By affirming the existence of the audience, the disruption is a relief to the performer.

Act IV : Revenge of the Audience

Departing from the relief of the performer at audience disruption, the fourth interpretation asserts that the performer should be punished rather than relieved. Audience disruption is the revenge of the audience against the performer. Necessary to explain this interpretation is a revising of the concept

¹⁷ Blau, Herbert. *The Audience*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990. Pg. 20

of the audience as a mere spectator. In addition to looking, the audience performs. The performance of audience membership consists of ritualized gestures and behaviors: laughing, applause, standing ovations, and so on. Recalling Sartre's situation of the person walking down a hallway and witnessing another man looking through a keyhole, one must note both the dramaturgy of this situation as well as the active role played by the spectator who steps into the scene.

In thinking through audience membership as a kind of performance, theorist Marco de Marinis has written on what he terms the dramaturgy of the spectator, which participates with other dramaturgical forces to produce the performative event:

The partial or relative autonomy of each of the different dramaturgies (the director's, the writer's, the performer's, the spectator's) all work together in the composition of the performance and must be seen as mutually setting and occasionally adjusting each other's boundaries.¹⁸

De Marinis' the dramaturgy of the spectator has two dimensions: the audience as a dramaturgical object and the audience as a dramaturgical subject. The objective or passive dramaturgy of the spectator refers to her placement in the space, the ushers that lead her about, and the management of her attention by the performance before her. The subjective dramaturgy indicates the receptive actions that actively produce the meaning of the work. In his discussion of the spectator as a dramaturgical subject, De Marinis makes clear that he is not referring to the participation of the audience in the action of the performance: "Of course, the spectator's 'cooperation' does not refer to those rare cases which call for an effective, material contribution from the audience..."¹⁹ I would like to redirect De Marinis' concept to discuss precisely the audience's intervention into the performance's action.

The audience is always already a collaborative partner in the performance. They perform certain actions just as the performers move through a rehearsed set of activities. Yet the theatrical situation oppresses the audience in a way that the performers are not oppressed. I preface an explanation of this imbalance with the mutual disdain of performers and audience members through Nietzsche's *ressentiment*. The situation of performance is characterized

¹⁸ De Marinis, Marco. "Dramaturgy of the Spectator" in *The Drama Review*. Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1987), Pg. 101.

¹⁹ Ibid. Pg. 102

by a feeling of *ressentiment* that is pervasive amongst the audience and the performers. Nietzsche's *ressentiment* refers to the displacement of one's own culpability onto an exterior force or other person. Rather than understand one's own weakness as the cause of one's inferior position, the person of *ressentiment* blames whoever is in the stronger position, as Nietzsche states: "This inversion of the value-positing eye - this *need* to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself – is the essence of *ressentiment...*"²⁰ In the context of performance, *ressentiment* is felt by both performers and audience members. Those on stage feel oppressed by the gaze, which provokes shame. Those in the audience feel oppressed by the darkness, resentful that they must sit inert and watch a foolish, contemptible person monopolize everyone's attention.

In this tension of mutual disdain, the disruption of the audience brings to a climax the *ressentiment* in the situation of performance. Performers have made attempts at a revenge on the audience such as the Dadaist and Futurist pieces that made fun of spectators and Peter Handke's play *Offending the Audience* which hurls insults and berates the audience for simply sitting there watching someone else work. Issuing from resentment and envy, audience disruption is the equivalent revenge upon performers. Disruptions allow the audience a wider performative and dramaturgical range as they are usually confined to ritualized, conventional activity such as clapping, murmuring, and occasionally coughing. Instead of letting the performers monopolize the creative input to the event, disruption is a revolt against the performer's control over the situation. By refusing to sit silently in the darkness, the disruptive audience member finally takes revenge upon the performer. In the case of *The Power of Theatrical Madness*, the performers asked the attention of the audience during the four-hour performance which itself extended the duration of each action until exhaustion. The performers who had exhausted themselves from running in place were allowed a period to rest and smoke cigarettes on stage. Adapting the experimentation with duration and exhaustion, the audience enacted their exhaustion with revenge against the play.

7. Shame! Anguish! Bad Faith!

The interpretations here are clearly not exhaustive. One can imagine a young, feeble poet reading to a pub full of insufferable drunks who drown out his

²⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. by Walter Kaufman. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Pg. 38-9

verse with crude, banal chatter, or a choreographer performing at an informal concert in which the audience fails to notice that she is performing at all. Situations such as these may encourage a disparagement of audience disruptiveness, rather than its defense or celebration. However, one must be careful in fantasizing about a performance that is free of fear, anguish, and shame for both the performers and audience members.

From a Sartrean perspective, the notion of a supportive performance environment in which everyone enjoys themselves and their role in the evening is nothing more than bad faith. Sartre's notion of bad faith rests on his conception of human freedom: "Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in freedom."²¹ The essence of our being is nothingness, and hence freedom, as any number of actions or behaviors are possible. Since human beings do not possess an essence, there is not any mechanism or force to determine what actions a person will take. Freedom produces anguish in the subject: "In anguish, freedom is anguished before itself inasmuch as it is instigated and bound by nothing."²² Anguish is the result of the subject's lack of understanding of the proper course of action and the will to insist that one abides by this course of action. As I am free of an essence, nothing determines whether I will or will not act in my own interest, which itself floats without a basis. Bad faith is the denial of freedom by its possessor and the adherence to a false notion of self: "...we flee from anguish by attempting to apprehend ourselves from without as an Other or as a thing."²³ In this constitution of the self as having a specific, determined nature, one attempts the impossible project of circumventing anguish by deceiving oneself, which is bad faith. A situation of glee in which one is doing what one wants to do is a situation of bad faith, as freedom and anguish undermine any semblance of happiness. In addition to contentedness with the self, contentedness with the other is also an act of bad faith. For Sartre, the relation between the self and the other is irreparably unequal: "I realize him [the Other] through *uneasiness*; through him I am perpetually *in danger*..."²⁴ The self is in the position of being an object, and the other is in a pure subject. For Sartre, this lack of equality between the self and the other and the impossibility of level relations cannot be escaped.

²¹ Sartre. Pg. 60

²² Ibid. Pg. 73

²³ Ibid. Pg. 82

²⁴ Ibid. Pg. 367

In the context of performance, bad faith enters into any professed love, enjoyment, or obligation to the stage, performing, or watching. Each party involved in performance cannot escape freedom and hence anguish in the theater. Providing interpretations that make a case for why audience disruption would be reasonable must not be mistaken for a presumption of justice in the theater. Rather than proclaim performers or the audience as triumphant, I must acknowledge that each undergoes irrevocable anguish.

8. To the rowdy

To those who marched into the Broadway theaters on 42nd Street during intermission and played recordings of the death tolls in Vietnam, leaving the audience to decide whether they could sit with themselves through the second half of their saccharine musical.

To the WPA dancers and audience members of 1935 that occupied theater buildings after the performances to strike for continued federal funding of modern dance.

To those young students and Stravinsky supporters who slugged a few on behalf of the 1913 performance of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

To the OP rioters, those charming audience members who participated in the Old Price Riots of 1809, which broke out after the Theatre at Covent Garden in London reopened and raised ticket prices significantly. The riots lasted three months, and ended with John Philip Kemble, the manager of the theatre, being forced to make a public apology.

To those who crumble fourth walls everywhere.

We few, we rowdy few.

DUDE, LOSE THE INSTRUMENTALITY: ART AS MICROPOLITICAL ANARCHISM: A POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

What is the relationship between politics and art?

- A. Art is a political weapon.
- B. Art has nothing to do with politics.
- C. Art serves imperialism.
- D. Art serves revolution.
- E. The relationship between politics and art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things.

-Carl Andre (2005, 55)

Q: Is there any ambiguity regarding art's relationship to politics?

A: I think you are right on this one, Chuck. One is dizzied by the unending variety of imperatives for radical aesthetic production. *Art must critique the ideology that serves to obscure one's political interests. Art must make certain political positions sensuous and seductive. Art must refrain from explicit politics as this nullifies its radical contribution. Art should not represent politics; it should politicize representation. Art must have nothing to do with life; this distance is precisely what makes it radical. Alienate the audience: make them aware of the techniques used to dupe them. Art should serve as a means to bridge alienated subjectivity. Destroy museums and theaters: collapse the distinction between art and life.*

Q: How does one stay fresh for the Q&A?

A: I try to carve out some space for possibilities beyond instrumentalism (art is a tool for political change).

Q: Why are we bored by instrumentality? Can you set up a straw man and unfairly represent instrumental politics?

A: Here is a sketch. Instrumentalism is all about having a specific end to achieve and then determining the most efficient means to obtain this end. Thinks in terms of strategy and calculation, willing to use any number of tools, devices, or mechanisms. The whole thing rests on this instrumental rationality thing, the ability to rationally assess different strategic actions before one acts.

Q: How would I know instrumental politics when I meet him?

A: Watch for the tropes of violence, armed struggle, propaganda by the deed.

Q: What does it look like art is harnessed instrumentally?

A: Take three things into account: content, context, and form. You can have instrumental content, art that is *about* radical politics, using this *aboutness* to some political end. Then you can have instrumental context, art affiliated with social movements. It doesn't matter what the art is really, mostly the sense of proximity, the sense of a cultural front. Lastly, there is instrumental form, aesthetic form signifying political praxis. The openness of the act of aesthetic production represents a certain politics, as anarchist art historian Allan Antliff writes:

The anarchist abstractionist seeks to create art that transcends closure, art that is capable of *signifying* the freedom and spontaneity that constitutes the foundation of anarchism's political programme. (2008, 14, my emphasis)

Q: What did that guy who paints 'zips', I can't remember his name, say about the relevance of his formal experiments?

A: Barnett Newman declared "if my work were understood it would be the end of state capitalism and totalitarianism." (O'Neill, 1990)

Q: So if instrumentality is committed to tools and getting the job done, what is this political prefiguration?

A: Yes and no. The word *prefigure* is from the Latin word *praefigurare*, which joins the two words *prae* ('before') and *figurare* ('to form, fashion'). Prefiguration is thus to "imagine beforehand," to think of an early version of a society to come. Written in 1905, the preamble to the constitution of Industrial Workers of the World stated, 'By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.' Prefigurative politics attempt to close the gap between means and ends. A questioning of instrumental rationality. A fear that movements could become bureaucratic apparatuses no longer attentive to immediate concerns and interests. An attention to notions of personal and cultural transformation. Sometimes but not always involving drugs.

Q: What happened to the sense of 'it happening' or some climatic showdown erupting from the constituent tensions within capitalism?

A: Prefigurative politics no longer looked towards a definite political end, towards the revolution. It engages in an act that has no end, as Wini Breines has written on the New Left:

the crux of prefigurative politics imposed substantial tasks, the central one being to create and sustain within the live practice of the movement,

relationships and political forms that 'prefigured' and embodied the desired society. (1982, 6)

Q: Take home message?

A: Prefigurative politics, a politics whose means contain their own ends. Like starting something and not knowing what it is. A how it is to be done without a what is to be done. But sometimes you'll see some people talk about 'non-violence' and 'peaceful protest,' at which point brandish whatever knives we are carrying.

Q: What can we make of the relation between prefigurative politics and art?

A: I think we would look at the social relations within aesthetic production and reception. That we would address myriad forms of exploitation and domination not just by the state, a capitalist class, but also by an author, an audience, a critic, so on. Art could be conceived as prefigurative of a society to come. Art is not removed from politics nor is it a mere instrument for change. The artwork becomes its own politics.

Q: Are we impatient?

A: We can no longer bear messianic time. It's all gonna happen tonight. Forever is gonna start tonight. We want to make work that has the possibility of producing fleeting, temporary relations. The kind of work which manifests a set of relations within their duration, not bothering with an elsewhere. Work animated by the play of desire.

Q: If we were to attempt clarity, what are the conditions of possibility for prefigurative art?

A: The first condition is the means as ends. Not blueprints, plans or maps for a new society, rather laboratories, experiments, and attempts. Not a gesture towards politics, but work that performs its politics. Collapse the distinction between means and ends. Refuse to wait for the eventual arrival of the revolution. *Immediacy! Immanence!* *Propaganda by the deed* simply becomes *the deed*.

Q: What does literary scholar Jesse Cohn refer to as an anarchist ethics to aesthetic production?

A: This ethics [anarchist ethics] refuses to locate the desired good in some utopian elsewhere or elsewhen, in the afterlife or after the revolution, a deferral which authorizes the dualism of 'ends' versus 'means'... (2007, 116)

Q: Okay, so we are thinking about the social relations of art. We know that you like the audience. What does 'the audience' come into play if there is one at all?

A: Think about the audience as the work. Think about artworks that establish social relationships between audience members, and these relationships become constitutive of the artwork itself. Think of Bourriaud's *relational aesthetics* and the making of relations as the aesthetic act:

otherwise put, the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist. (2002, 13)

Q: Relational aesthetics is not fresh. It is tired.

A: Yes, but only if you think about it as contemporary art vogue rather than a methodology. Think about it as a stage to move through. Once you shift from thinking about a work as an object to a set of relations, then you can return to boring old art objects as works of relational art. A sociality emerges around every work. The dialectic between objects and social relations.

Q: If the task is to simply create situations that we want to be in, moments that are desirable, the politics seems to be lost. What about about negation, critique? Augmenting antagonisms?

A: Explicit opposition or critique fails to deliver the political goods it promises. Again, Bourriaud:

any stance that is 'directly' critical of society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that is nowadays impossible, not to say regressive. (31)

Q: What is the second condition of possibility for prefigurative art?

A: The dispersion of power. Which is not to say that power is not already dispersed in disciplinary societies, societies of lateral social coercion, societies without heads or gods or centers. Rather, it is to burst through the false consciousness of the state. Social or collective force emerges from the matrix of relationships not from a center. We try to counter the alienation of power such that what belongs to horizontal relationships immanent in a social group appears displaced within a state. And so, we look at power dynamics in the production and reception of work. What and who is involved with a particular work, and a politicization of these relationships. Reject a territorialization by the art object, the text, the author, the performers, the critic, or the audience.

Q: How do we stage a lateral meeting of the text and the reader?

A: Jesse Cohn has something to say:

...we seek to enter into a dialogue with the text, not only to critique it from an external perspective seen as superior, but to reconstruct our perspective with the aid of the text itself. (117)

...instead of positing ourselves as the slaves or the masters of the texts, we ought to place ourselves into a dynamic relation with them, to see each encounter with them as a dialogue fraught with risk and promise. (119)

Q: How do we curl together, the book and I?

A: The reader does not assume a dominant or superior position over the text but enters into a horizontal encounter. The text does not dominate the reader as in the mythology of propaganda or a hypodermic model in which a representation, narrative, or image is simply injected into a passive audience by a text. Nor does a reader dominate a text as in the cases of book banning and other instances in which a reader ties down and refuses a text. A reader and a text mutual displace each other:

Only if the text and I can contest one another, call each other into question, can there be an exercise of the 'collective reason' which permits freedom to coexist with community. (120)

Q: At each of the nodes of production and reception, we consider those participating in design - the choreographers, directors, or composers – and those who execute the work – the dancers, actors, or musicians – we eliminate the distinction between the two or devise a non-exploitative production process?

A: Yes. Although let's not get too enchanted with production and notions of productivity without a healthy disdain for the labor-form.

Q: But if we were to consider the aesthetic relations of production, Allan Antliff has used the term the *open structure*. Your comment?

A: He does write of this sharing of power in the process of making a work.

...contemporary anarchists are developing art that fosters anarchist politics in practice, by transforming art-making into an egalitarian process that is itself unbounded. (14)

One must also consider other centralizations of power: the critic who single-handedly declares what the audience thought of the work, the author who states what the work is *really* about, the audience member who opens the newspaper to discover what she thought of the work. Such territorializations.

Q: Let me pose a critique. So a couple artists collaborate, work together rather than putting someone in a director's role. What does that have to do with the pressing political situations around us? Does prefigurative art not amount to a politics of interiority, a closing of the relevance of art to the people who happened to be involved with a work, and even for these people, a closing to only the small sliver of their day that has to do with art?

A: The third condition of possibility for prefigurative art is going small. The scale is an asset.

Q: Small like rats!

A: Yes, just like rats! As we remember from Deleuze and Guattari, there are two dimensions of the political, macropolitics and micropolitics, the molar and the molecular. There is a tendency to view the difference between them as a difference in size. Yet d+g thwart such an understanding:

Although it is true that the molecular works in detail and operates in small groups, this does not mean that it is any less coextensive with the entire social field than molar organization. (1987, 215)

This penetration of politics, its micropolitical seepage into every domain of life, contrasts with an understanding of politics as delimited to a discrete set of institutions – the state, the means of production, etc. One that politicizes the details and the micro-movements of daily life - these petite and insidious micropolitical operations how individuals speak, touch, interact these daily and local practices. A vigilance:

It's too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective. (215)

The macropolitical and the micropolitical are co-constitutive; they construct each other. Micropolitics are no less dangerous than macropolitics. The two cannot be easily teased apart.

Q: And so, we go small, we go the way of the rat?

A: Which also means that we go big. Skyscrapers are filled with a vast network of rats, mostly invisible.

Q: So we go small to be unseen?

A: And for another reason. We must stay minute enough so as to not loose a certain degree of integrity. The impulse can be whittled away, decayed, or lost when it is transmitted through larger channels, the internet or giant

auditoriums. We must attempt to set the terms of the situation. Perhaps going into a small space, a closet, to retain its promise.

Q: Remind me why it is important that some artists and audience members are in a closest attempting dispersed interactivity?

A: We must avoid the fantasy of a 'hard politics,' that there is a way to do politics the right way. A proliferation, this thrusting forward from innumerable positions, these multiple and various attempts, a multiplicity of experiments at all nodes of production, performance, exhibition, and reception - lend themselves to strategies for how to run an event, meeting, talk, or even a society without work. The singular or the locatable strategy, that of 'hard politics,' is more easily regulated and defeated.

Q: Okay, so we have some sense of what prefigurative art might mean - means as ends, dispersion of power, going small.

A: It is not for taxonomic purposes, so that the next time one encounters a certain work, one can say *Ah ha! This is prefigurative art!* as if to render a work knowable and predictable. Rather we are interested in new ways of seeing work, making work, talking about work.

Q: How do we approach looking a specific pieces? Any methodological notes?

A: We begin with an explicit position of impurity. One can find complicity and political insufficiency anywhere. Each work makes compromises with the culture industry, the state - *but this is in a big fancy museum or but this was only accessible to people who could afford it or but the audience was full of people with the same race and class background.* There is no way of being outside of the society that one lives in, no way of living and making that is not permeated by various forms of violence. Each work must begin somewhere, inserting itself in the sticky relations of cultural production. Leave space for what they might offer in formulating new modes of production and reception.

Q: What is “Before your door is all the way open”?

A: It is a work by conceptual sound artist Seth Kim Cohen, performed in November 2005 at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and in May 2007 at the Aloud/Allowed Festival in New Haven and perhaps elsewhere. There are three performers - a person sitting in front of a keyboard on stage and two people sitting behind the rows of audience members facing the keyboardist.

From the back of the room, Whisperer 1 whispers an instruction in the ear of a member of the audience, asking them to pass it along to the organist on

stage. The instruction moves through the audience, mutating. Some audience members simply mis-hear it and pass it on incorrectly. Others deliberately change the instruction. Certain instructions are deliberately difficult to repeat. Sometimes Whisperer 1 starts one instruction on one side of the room, while Whisperer 2 starts a contradictory instruction from the other side. The 2 instructions race toward the organist, the organist's actions differ depending on which one gets there first. (Kim-Cohen)

The instructions vary from holding down specific notes to placing objects on the keys and other such actions that produce sounds and silences rather than *music* per say.

Q: What happened during the performances?

A: In one performance, the audience members in the last row did not whisper the instructions forward leaving the keyboardist motionless on stage. In the other performance, the audience complied with whispering the instructions.

Q: Why do we like this piece?

A: It creates a deliberate structure of necessary failure to arrive at its alleged end. The piece makes itself impossible, incompetent in its own realization. Audience members will pass on different or new instructions. The instructions themselves contradict each other. Kim Cohen has written on the artistic use of incompetence. Competence connected to instrumentality:

Competence, in a psycho-legal sense, refers to a link between intention and realization. (2006, 6)

In this work, the keyboardist can only encounter incompetence. Rather than audience members capitulating to the musician, lacking a say in what happens, the piece provides a way to interject their desires into the work, builds a sociality into the piece. Its manifestation depends on the audience.

Q: Why do we like to whisper?

A: Its not insignificant that its machinic operation utilizes the activity of whispering to and between audience members. A sense of intimacy. One usually whispers to secrets in social and spatial closeness. Oh! the repeated touch between those in the room.

Q: What does 'stau' mean?

A: It is the German word for *traffic jam*. It is also a choreography made by the Dutch choreographer Anouk van Dijk for four dancers in 2006. The piece begins with the audience sitting in a small square of chairs a few rows thick,

leaving in the middle a performance space of approximately ten square feet. During the first half of the choreography, the dancers perform very small gestures in close proximity to each other and to audience members. Midway through the work, crew members remove all chairs from the space, forcing audience members to vacate their seats. The small square that the audience had formed around the performance space disintegrates and opens into a huge, dimly lit space. The dancers and the audience are loose in the space. Any differentiation between the space of the performance and the space of the audience is lost. Lights fade in and out throughout the room, drawing one's attention to a certain area or what a particular dancer was doing. Van Dijk here describes the work:

STAU dissolves traditional theatrical boundaries to examine the relationship between audience and performer and transforms the experience of contemporary dance. A confined square stage opens out to an expansive limitless space... As STAU develops and spaces shift, the relationship between spectator and performer becomes increasingly involved and connected. (Van Dijk)

Q: It sounds like a Space Lagoon, no?

A: Yes, the becoming-lagoon of the space of the dance as it deterritorialized and reterritorialized. The dance does not refer to an *out there*. It is not *about* anything. Rather a specific content or end, there are relationships between bodies. The encounter itself – the assemblage of choreography, dancers, audience members, lights, chairs, crew, gallery space – as its content. Audience members decide where to stand, what to look at, and what they want to do with their bodies. Within a set of overdetermined macropolitical discourses regarding arts funding, cultural policy, and the cultural apparatus of the state, a finer grain of political relationships between the dancers and the audience emerge. Meet me at the lagoon.

Q: What did Judith Malina of the Living Theater write about their work?

A: "...we managed for almost thirty years to support a traveling theatrical anarchist commune, using ourselves very consciously as an experiment in the possibility of such survival." (1994)

Q: How can one predict or assess what sort of assemblage art makes with radical politics? How does one know where to throw one's weight?

A: Sometimes I feel so tired, so caught.

Q: To whom is the idea of prefigurative art addressed?

A: To those who have a dual set or an incongruous set of commitments: artists committed to radical politics, radicals committed to aesthetic production, artists committed to making work who find themselves tied up in overdetermining political and economic structures, radicals whom despite themselves are an enchanted with an image, a song, a dance. To those who take imperatives seriously and are dizzied by them.

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[A version of this, written as a 'paper,' was presented at the Renewing the Anarchist Tradition conference in Montpelier, Vermont.]

ARTIST-OCCUPIED SPACE + THE POLITICS OF VENUE

Take the canvas down! I want to see the wall!

Spatial conditions of cultural production- Activism and art are always located somewhere. Even immaterial labor requires a geographic place for the worker to think. Given that the concern for space is integral to production, one possibility for activism is to experiment with venue, the site for making and circulating ideas and objects. The politics of venue rest in not what is made but how the necessary spatial conditions of production are obtained.

Collectivizing problems- Rather than seeking individuated solutions in therapy, marriage, or upward mobility, we hope to collectivize our own predicaments and engender a non-neoliberal subjectivity. We are bored/woeful with getting a job that steals our time and energy to labor on useless endeavors so that we can pay rent on an apartment that is too small to do projects, which we do not have the time to do anyways.

Abstract space- To approach a project that considers squatted social centers, activist-occupied spaces, or more generally, the politics of venue, might be to begin at the level of space itself. Although, to say so is already to beg the question of what is flattened in that term. Admittedly, at least for the moment, it slouches away from the virtual and the intergalactic.

The particular partition of the sensible that conditions space in our historical moment is that which was allowed by the French Revolution and which freed art from everything but itself as capitalism freed the worker from everything but the imperative to sell labor. This is the modernist zone of abstract space. Abstract space may be characterized, imaginedly so, as a passive, sanctified scaffolding for the ideal and efficient realization of work, site-specific or transportable. The space itself is whitewashed, relegated to a supporting roll, literally a wall for support. Social relations are submitted to that between the beholder and the beheld. What the authority of abstract space and these temporal modes obscure is the necessary construction, both conceptual and material, of all space.

What allows us to see this construction is the act or the trace of re-appropriation, when one type of space becomes or coexists with another. Re-

appropriation requires first the laying of claim to a particular space and then the conversion of that space. We proffer a quintpartite typology of conversion:

1. borrowed space – enacts ephemerality and adoptability through obtainment of space for an agreed upon amount of time (a landowner grants use of a vacated space for the purpose of an exhibition)
2. domestic space – combines the needs of eating and sleeping with activities regularly practiced at specialized spaces outside the home (a kin group hosts a concert in its living room)
3. found space – by chance or by research space previously unnoticed is suddenly realized to be potent (the lobby preceding an elevator could be used as a forum for issues in architecture)
4. shared – one space publicly being used to two different ends (the front of the space houses a performance area and the back an office and dining patio)
5. stolen – space is appropriated without legal right (a vacated space is squatted)

Spatial Scale- When considering different modes of conversion, the question of scale immediately arises: on what scale does conversion occur? Conversion is not conversion in general, but always on a particular scale. The production of a converted space implies the production of a specific scale that allows the conversion to be visible. Marxist geographer Neil Smith has written on spatial scale and the active production of scale: “The making of place implies the production of scale insofar as places are made different from each other; scale is the criterion of difference not between places so much as different kinds of places.”¹ For Smith, scale is actively produced and one must make visible the social processes of their production rather than freeze spatial scale. Attention to scale can help draw out the mode and politics of conversion.

We identify five spatial scales on which conversion occurs: body, group, movement, city, and region. The scale of body refers to the relation of an individual person to a space. The scale of the group contains the social relations amongst persons within a specific space. The movement scale refers to the relationships between specific spaces contained within social movements. The scale of the city pertains to the relation of a specific space to its urban context. Lastly, regional scale widens to the relationship between spaces in different areas, separated by land, water, or other division.

Temporal scale- Just as space may be parsed according to scale, so too may time. In consideration of a social center, an initial scale might be that of an object itself – a zine, an album, a vegetable patch - its production, material durability, and persistence. Next might be that of the body, at which scale the life of the activist is the time that conditions our consideration. More broadly, the scale of social movement is indicative of the machinations of history that place a group or event in a chain of influence. One of the reasons temporal scale is of concern is the issue of nomenclature. While “collective space,” “collaborative space,” “social center,” “squat,” and “anti-space,” all attempt to name something similar, their resonance and translation will be dependent upon the experiences in time, and at a specific scale, of their speaker.

Jumping Scale- The issue of scale is especially relevant for the discussion of gentrification in relation to social centers. Just looking at spaces on the scale of the city may lead one to find evidence of the ways in which art/activist spaces have contributed to investment and disinvestment in different parts of the city resulting in the displacement of lower income communities. Smith’s concept of jumping scale can reframe this understanding of the participation of cultural centers in gentrification by widening the scope of analysis. Jumping scales involves a shift in the discourse from one scale to another: “to ‘jump scales’ – to organize the production and reproduction of daily life and to resist oppression and exploitation at a higher scale – over a wider geographical field.”² If one widens the scale from the city to the economic system at large, other dynamics become visible: the commodification of land and housing, which is held as private property. The displacement of low-income residents caused by gentrification must be contextualized within a capitalist economic system that allows private property in land, speculation, and monopolization of space. The crime of gentrification is not that of art/activist spaces but that of capitalism itself. Through the maneuver of jumping scales, the critique of gentrification must be widened to a critique of capitalism.

¹⁺² Neil Smith, "Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale", *Social Text* (33: 1992), pp. 62

Annihilated space- The neoliberal imperative of reproductive futurity to be productive and to reproduce conditions our experience of space. The machine of signification is analogous to that of industrial production. While the city operates on the discursive level of an ever-increasing efficiency, no matter the ways in which the city is sanitized, the project of sanitation obscures the inevitability of waste. With this in mind, we shift our optic from betterment

and beautification and cycles of investment to a celebration of the sub-urban environment and the ruins of children's street culture – ephemeral and informal congregations of expended camps and shelters; interstitial spaces of queer sex, drug use, and crime; spreading trails of archeological revelation and global expansion; visions that the apocalypse is not something that has happened or is yet to come, but that has already always been here as a festering threat, slowly decomposing a developmental, adult reality; spaces halfway between a wound and a scar.

Inside/Outside Fantasy- We face our immediate failure to make a stable distinction between mainstream spaces and alternative spaces. We do not know how to make claims about what is essentially inside or outside of the mainstream nor do we have much interest in doing so. Alternative spaces cannot be purely outside of broader economic structures as a pure space of exteriority and opposition is unavailable. The question of what precisely constitutes an anti-capitalist space is not possible to resolve. The term *anti-capitalist* suggests that one can understand the essence of capitalism and doing precisely opposite of that. We, however, reject an essentialist view of capitalism. Not only does the system continue to shift in unforeseeable ways, but so do critical modes of analysis. We leave it an open question of what constitutes the dominant economic paradigm and what constitutes alternatives to that paradigm. We prefer to catalogue the number of proposals tried by activists – converting, occupying, squatting, collectivizing - rather than settling for a single analysis. The possibility left open is that a social center may generate an excess or surplus that cannot be contained in the running of a normalized space. This excess or leak constitutes the spatial activism of a venue.

The Recuperation / Excess Dialectic

It's too bad she won't live! But then again, who does?

-Blade Runner (1982)

Recuperation. Collectivized spaces can be used by advertisers, land speculators, capital, commercial galleries, collectors, whoever against the interests of the activists and artists who created them. The figure of the alternative art space became reified on the most expensive of theaters in New York when actors on Broadway played their poor Lower East Side counterparts sans aesthetic experimentation in the musical Rent. If a grievance of exploitation drove artists to build their own spaces in the first

place, this exploitation continues: the crimes of the developer/land-speculator/land-monopolizer are art-washed.

Excess. There exist a certain pockets where activists can produce an excess over what is currently possible. One must not assume that the present state of things is impenetrable and omnipotent. Not all goes well for the ruling class: one can think of the current economic crisis as produced by internal conflicts amongst different sectors of capital. As Deleuze and Guattari have written, "...power centers are defined much more by what escapes them or by their impotence than by their zone of power."¹ As every zone of power generates a zone of impotence, one must find these and try something, without assuming that it will last forever or bemoaning its eventual obsolescence.

¹ Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. by Brian Massumi. New York: Continuum, 2004. Pg. 239

Preliminary Conclusions

- >Look for the categories those involved in a space use to understand what they are doing.
- >Do not resist: there is no pure-space of anti-capitalism. Rather, open possibilities and fissures rather than to refuse the present society.
- >We do not need to dream up a new wheel/society; we need to grab control of what already exists.
- >Focus on building affiliation rather than negation; social movements rather than vanguardism.
- >Unwaged labor is exploitation, not freedom. DIY is self-exploitation.
- >De-fetishize the factory: post-industrial space is not the only type of converted space and not the only mode of conversion.
- >Think in terms of scale, both in how scale is constituted and on what scale a certain allegiance operates.
- >Nothing fits a model; rather, a model is fitted to amalgamated bits of otherwise detritus that we accept and collect as such.

let's never leave, i thought. we must stay here. in the sad detritus of industry where anything is possible. i don't think they will find us here.

Olive + Daniel

CFP AS GENRE: THE POETICS OF A CALL FOR PAPERS

Most of the time, when someone asks me a question, even one which relates to me, I see that, strictly, I don't have anything to say. Questions are invented, like anything else. If you aren't allowed to invent your questions, with elements from all over the place, from never mind where, if people "pose" them to you, you haven't much to say. The art of constructing a problem is very important: you invent a problem, a problem-position, before finding a solution. None of this happens in an interview, a conversation, a discussion.
-Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pg. 1.

Deleuze and Parnet's disparagement of conversation can also be read as admiration for the formulation of problems, the composition of questions. The CFP is precisely this, a literary form that is concerned with laying out a question. CFPs, which variously refer to 'call for papers' or 'call for proposals,' are an under appreciated literary genre. They condense a great deal of intellectual labor into usually less than a page, often employing an elegant brevity. The CFP forces the writer to set a scene with swiftness and assuredness as there is no time for extensive citations or explication.

The CFP is generally divided into four parts. The first is the introduction of a future event, usually a conference, through a listing of the title, the location, the dates, and so on. The second is a paragraph or two that outlines the topic of the conference. The third section is an array of topics for possible discussion at the conference. The last section usually specifies the requirements and details for the submission of a paper.

What is notable about CFPs is the force of condensation from which blooms a succinct formulation of a problem or set of concerns. The CFP is the setting of a stage, the laying of a terrain. One page of text will enable dozens, maybe hundreds of people to gather and speak to each other. Hovering over every encounter will be the language prepared in the CFP. It will dwell within each presentation as an anchor that will tether would would be a dizzying heterogeneity into the semblance of a discussion.

Not only is the CFP a means that creates the conditions of possibility for a conversation, it also performs a complex political maneuver. One's politics are revealed not by how one answers a question, but by the kind of question one asks. The politics is in the formation of questions, which positions what is inside and what is outside the frame of the subject. CFPs set the table. They

name the dimensions and contours of what will be on the table for discussion. By crafting the set of questions, they function as political arbiters. They hold the power of the curator, the power to not only pick the subject matter but also to frame it.

I propose a brief excursion into examining the CFP as genre. As objects of consideration, they have a few common delights. They are fortunate to lack a singular author and often appear as a collective utterance, emerging from some conference committee or editorial collective rarely with any names listed. They make ample use of poetic repetition, the recurrence of one word rattling through the text like a reverberating train car. One can also admire the CFP's mustering of conviction, staking a position with little space to modify, cite, or retreat. The best CFPs often fall into two categories: the oddly expansive or the oddly specific. I have assembled a selection of choice CFPs that exemplify these two tendencies.

A/

Civilisation and Fear
22-25 September
Ustron, Poland

*And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.*
T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land, ll.27-30

What Eliot voices here is, no doubt, his fear and, simultaneously, concern about the prospects of European civilization as he saw it in the first decades of the 20th c. Eliot's lines carry eschatological overtones, too. Do we fear the end of our civilization, or the condition it has reached at present? What is the connection between fear and civilization? Are we still waiting for the barbarians? Do we have more fear of the real or the virtual? Should we, perhaps, opt for the positive senses of fear whose presence may testify to the mystery human life is, or brings to light the limitations which human life involves? Can we possibly conquer our fears by writing about them, and redefining their sources? Aren't we – as individuals, citizens, family members, superiors and inferiors, natives and strangers, bodies and spirits – our own fears writ large?

This call for papers is not intended to alarm or intimidate anyone. We extend a cordial invitation to all scholars who take genuine interest in any of the issues raised in the title of the conference as well as those listed below. Our aim is to address a

multiplicity of concerns which often coincide and intersect in modern discourses (including literary and cultural studies, psychology, sociology, religious studies, art and others). However, we propose to consider writing (both literary and non-literary) as a window onto, and a meeting ground for, the following themes:

Arts & literature: the future of arts; literatures of terror; artistic (literary) modes (genres) of terror; the terrific/horrific sublime; (limits of) self-fashioning and self-expression; anxiety of influence in the age of parody, travesty and appropriation

Civilization & technology: fear of modernization & of acceleration; clashes of civilizations; the fearful interplay between culture and nature; man vis-à-vis machine (e.g., threats to humanness, simulacra of the human as source of anxiety, “new” humanity)

Politics & ideology: enslavement, subjection, subordination through discourses; the “fearful asymmetry”: discourses & practices of the modern state (intersections of the political and the personal); democracy, liberty(ies), religion: from orthodoxy to fundamentalism and back, the self of ideology

Discourses: thanatophobia and the postmodern condition; religious studies as a necessary/contingent by-product of recent traumas; fear and/of metaphysics; power and its institutions as forces prescribing discourses of the self

Identity / the self: phobias of exposure to fear and trauma; the threatened/shifting selfhood & competing models of subjectivity; the sub/un/conscious; the Lacanian Real

This is perhaps my favorite CFP I have encountered so far. There are so many details to note and admire. This obviously falls into the oddly expansive category as both 'civilization,' 'fear,' and the relationship between the two are something of a toss up. The contrast between the specificity of examining a few lines of T.S. Eliot and the generality of the conference's subject matter highlights this play between narrowness and width. This contrast is reiterated in the list of themes. The words before the colon are hopelessly general ('Arts & Literature') and what follows the colon are specific, quirky terms. The assembled lists of topics display a charming idiosyncrasy, especially in the use of conjunctions and punctuation which reveal clever linkages between ideas. The CFP explicitly mentions that it does not intend to frighten the reader, but even the inclusion of this assurance creates an ominous sense about the conference, as if one expects something baleful will occur. A seminar room full of dead bodies, worms squirming amongst the fruit platter, billows of smoke slowly floating into the plenary. The series of questions drawn out of the lines

from Eliot indicate the looming forces of fear and the gears of civilization that will haunt the conference and any trembling CFP reader.

B/

Vegetarians, VILFs and Fang-Bangers: Modern Vampire Romance in print and on screen

24 November

De Montfort University
Leicester, UK

Vampires have had a long and complex relationship with human beings and have been threatening and attracting us through folklore, literature, film and television for centuries. But now they walk among us, seeking to integrate themselves into our culture, to be our business partners, friends and lovers. Why do we now prefer our vampires with a sensitive nature or with their ruthlessness focused on business deals? How does this change affect the relationship between both species and genders? This one-day conference seeks to understand and criticize the phenomenal popularity of what is sometimes termed Dark Romance. Papers are sought on authors such as Stephanie Meyers, Charlene Harris, and Lauren K. Hamilton, the adaptation of Dark Romance books for both film and TV and a general consideration of the change in our relationship with the vampire.

Proposals are invited for 20-minute papers, which might address (though not exclusively) the following areas:

21st-century vampires in the Gothic literary tradition

Vampires and gender/relations

Adaptation and the shift of audience

Debates on the Other

Difference between film and television adaptation

Colonialism/postcolonialism/postnationalism

Vampires and money/business

Vampires and class relations

Vampires, authors and fans

This CFP represents the second tendency, that of the oddly specific, those which make a heroic effort of connecting a narrowly particular topic to an expansive set of concerns and ideas. The charm of this CFP dwells within its use of *our* and *we*, implicating everyone within the domain of the vampire. I am unfamiliar with any of the authors mentioned or with the genre of Dark Romance, and yet this CFP makes me aware that I am caught within the shifting logic of the contemporary vampire. I also admire the taking seriously of the literary imagination, the acknowledgment that the virtual exerts a performative, 'real' effect upon our lives.

C/

Cuteness, or the Pragmatics of Diminution
Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference
Department of Comparative Literature
Yale University
December 3

Smallness, childishness, cuteness often have an unpredictable effect on the reader or viewer of literature or art that plays with the multiform potential of diminution. This conference attempts to initiate a conversation about some of the most ubiquitous elements of artistic communication: cuteness and diminution. Adorable animals, objects intentionally made small, thoughts and feelings intentionally made twee pervade art, literature, music, advertisement, cinema, interpersonal relationships, and everyday speech. In a way, diminution defines and channels our understanding of the world around us. Our aim is to assemble a cluster of presentations that explore the appeal and the potency of this phenomenon from a variety of angles and disciplines.

Papers may focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics:

Childishness -- Diminution as strategy -- Diminutives as a grammatical and descriptive category -- Diminution and rhetoric -- Theories of diminution -- Metaphors of diminution or Diminution as metaphor -- Pets -- Smallness -- Cuteness and advertisement -- Diminution and genre -- Disneyfication in architecture, literature and visual arts -- Shirley Temple and her disciples -- Cognitive aspects of diminution -- Poetic diminution -- Diminution and descriptive strategies -- Cuteness and/or diminution as narrative device.

Please submit abstracts of approximately 300 words to yalecuteness@gmail.com. The deadline for abstract submissions is October 3.

After reading this CFP, I imagine a bunch of comp lit students emailing each other photos of baby bunnies or crowding around a laptop watching videos of kittens. This makes similar moves as the Vampire CFP: taking a particular idea, here cuteness, and using it as a lens to approach the field of cultural production in general. The crowning moment in this CFP is the topic of 'Shirley Temple and her disciples.' The word 'disciples' carries a religious vibe - disciples write extensive accounts, document the teachings of their mentor, start large organizations. The notion that Shirley Temple has disciples, followers, scholars leaves behind those readers who consider such a topic to be too light, too insubstantial for thoughtful consideration. It is the attention to that which falls out of the frame of serious discourse – Shirley Temple, photos of bunnies and kittens - that creates moments in which ideology can be felt.

D/

- Apparitions, ghosts, projections and visitations
- Blindness
- Dreams, illusions, hallucinations, visions, etc.
- Film/new media adaptation
- Humoralism
- Icons, illustration, illumination, portraits, emblems, etc.
- Language
- Light/darkness
- Optics
- Performance
- Physiology
- Space/spatiality
- Subject-/objectivity
- Time/temporality

I found this list of potential topics in one CFP. Can't remember what the conference was, don't think it matters. What is remarkable here is the disparate nature of the topics as well as their abstract character. It is almost as if someone wrote a list of things she likes thinking about and decided to call a conference to have some people to talk to.

E/

The Crisis of the Human Sciences: False Objectivity and the Decline of Creativity
Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait
March 6-8

Centralization and over-professionalization can lead to the disappearance of a critical environment capable of linking the disciplines to the “real world.” The humanities need to operate in a concrete cultural environment able to influence procedures on a *hic et nunc* basis and should not entirely depend on normative criteria whose function is often to hide ignorance behind a pretentious veil of value-neutral objectivity.

For example, in sociology, the growth of scientism has fragmented ethical categories and distorted discourse between inner and outer selves. Philosophy is suffering from an empty professionalism current in many philosophy departments in industrialized and developing countries where boring, ahistorical, and nonpolitical exercises are justified through appeals to false excellence.

In all branches of the humanities absurd evaluation processes foster similar tendencies as they create a sterile atmosphere and prevent interdisciplinarity and

creativity. An invidious technicization of theory plays into the hands of technocrats. Due to the centralization of editorial power in the hands of large university presses of anglophone countries, the content, quality, and range of modern publishing has become only too predictable.

How do people working in the humanities respond to the crisis in their respective disciplines? Papers including either meta-scientific considerations or concrete observations are welcome.

This is a meta-CFP, a CFP which offers a critique of other CFPs and the discourse amongst scholars in general. It slams what goes on at most conferences and calls forth the need for a conference about conferences. I enjoy that it reads like a rant and is unashamed in the brashness of its criticisms. I especially like thinking about the people who would attempt to submit to this, sitting at their desks, starting to prepare an abstract, and their fingers are suddenly halted by brooding doubt and disgust with themselves. Have they simply been putting on empty rituals of a fraudulent 'professionalism'? Why continue with the charade? And once the game is named, how does one proceed? Their gaze drifts away from the desk and towards the overcast sky out the window.

AGAINST THE COUPLE

No more mothers, women and girls, let's destroy the families!" was an invitation to the gesture of breaking the expected chains of events, to release the compressed potentialities.

It was a blow to the fucked up love affairs, to ordinary prostitution.

It was a call at overcoming the couple as elementary unit in the management of alienation.

-Tiqqun, 'How to?'

Libidinal flows cut under and through the social world. Amorous and sexual relations do not exist in some domain safely taped off from the rest of society. Rather they are constituent elements of nearly every aspect of social life. They flow and circulate amongst places of employment, intellectual debates, political organizing, artistic circles, playgrounds, and cemeteries. The elderly patient grabs at the breast of a nurse hunched over him. A governmental official strips his newly hired intern down to her leopard print thong during an important briefing in his office. The incarcerated man holds his hand up to the glass of the visiting booth, attempting to touch his wife after twenty years of their corporeal separation. Deleuze and Guattari write of these flows of libidinal desire and the desiring machines that operate within and amongst broader social mechanisms and machines: "Beneath the conscious investments of economic, political, religious, etc., formations, there are unconscious sexual investments, microinvestments that attest to the way in which desire is present in a social field... Desiring-machines function within social machines..."²⁵

What must be noted is that for women, these flows of desire are incessantly subjected to a system of organization, a logic which subverts the desiring flows against themselves. This channeling and organization of sex and amorous relations is targeted specifically against women and their collective interests. I will refer to this logic - that which funnels, simplifies, and reduces amorous desire to the needs of patriarchy - as the logic of the couple. This logic assumes that there is a single site for the fulfillment of one's social and sexual desires, that being a romantic relationship with a man. The couple is the threshold, the admission fee, the golden key that allows a woman to participate in the social world. The couple is the promise that, by entering it, one will no longer suffer from alienation, from isolation, from boredom, from rootlessness.

²⁵ Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
Pg.183.

The couple grants a woman person-hood and visibility. She obtains a title, a temporality, a space through the couple.

Patriarchal social relations are constructed such that 'the action' emerges from a group of men interested in each other. In artistic, intellectual, or political circles, there is often a cadre of men who produce 'the action' and 'the discourse.'²⁶ Women are granted access to this circle by developing sexual relations to those men. At the periphery are those un-coupled women, those loose dogs, who remain always at a distance from 'the action' - the space where debates, projects, and events are played out. The couple is the claim that the surest way for a woman to participate in whatever domain she desires, she must attach herself to a man via the couple mechanism. The couple is often the single device that protects a woman from the misogyny of a group of men. *Who's that? Oh I think it is Zach's girlfriend, Ben's- ex.* Women become known for their relationships to men, not for their contributions to 'the action.' The Beat women are remembered as 'girlfriends,' not poets in their own right.

Women chose different strategies when faced with patriarchal social relations and the logic of the couple. A woman who goes after a man with power in a certain milieu. A woman who always needs a man around and will take whatever she can get. A woman who revels in the confidence of being so-and-so's girlfriend. A woman who hates being single to the extent that she will take any man so long as he will stay. A woman who cheerfully sits on the 'girlfriend couch' during band practice. A woman who is depressed during the stretches in between boyfriends. A woman who views the man she is with as a mirror of her own prowess. A woman who holds out for a man impressive enough to advance her. A woman whose intellectual labor is monopolized by staying up

²⁶ The question of why men have control over the circulation of social flows, over the action and the discourse is beyond the scope of this essay. I will swiftly summarize by saying that women have been produced as a class to perform the unwaged work of social reproduction upon which the production of value is based. The category of woman is not an essentialist one, but one that produces certain modes of exploitation and relegates certain types of labor to a private, unwaged sphere. I invoke this category in order to make visible the gendered modes of exploitation and male control over what is inside and outside the value-form. 'The action and the discourse' is shorthand for the production of value. For more comprehensive feminist analysis concerning the operation of patriarchy, see: Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation.* Autonomedia, 2004, Mies, Maria. *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale.* Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

late writing apologetic emails to her boyfriend rather than writing her own poems, theory, or econometric formulas.

The logic of the couple mediates a woman's relationship to herself and her relationships to other women. In the production of herself as a woman, she is constantly aware of the need to make herself desirable, to make herself worthy of a man's desire, to be fit for a man's love. Does the femme fatale, the burlesque dancer, the seductive woman have men or do men have her? A woman may completely internalize the demands of the couple. She may rail against the sexual predatory male for stalking, sexual violence, or rape, while agreeing to the figuration of herself as attractive, as desired, as sought after, traits that must be produced. Relationships between women are mediated by the logic of the couple to the extent that women interact not to deepen their connection to each other but to gossip about boys, to process their relationships with men, to trade technologies of femininity whereby they can improve their status with men. In this way, the couple mediates relations between women.

The desire for a sexual relationship with a man is stacked. Who are these boyfriends? What does a woman think having one will get her? In short, everything. Loaded atop being in a couple is desire itself, which has been funneled and reduced to a single object by patriarchy. Young girls plan their weddings while still in kindergarten. Why does a woman sell out for some wank? She gives herself over to the couple in exchange for a promise of mediating her alienation and increasing her sense of 'security,' in the same way that a citizen gives themselves over to a repressive state that will ensure their 'security.' What is perhaps not visible at the outset is that the couple will further alienate and atomize her. Her labor will be unwaged, and she will have to answer to her husband in addition to her boss. Valerie Solanas heeds the atomizing function of the couple: "Our society is not a community, but merely a collection of isolated family units. Desperately insecure, fearing his woman will leave him if she is exposed to other men or to anything remotely resembling life, the male seeks to isolate her from other men and from what little civilization there is, so he moves her out to the suburbs, a collection of self-absorbed couples and their kids."²⁷ How much can a woman forgive? How much does she let slide? How long does she tolerate things being amiss, rotten, fucked up? She avoids breaking up at great costs because falling out of the logic of the couple will stymie her access to the precise mechanisms that are

²⁷ Solanas, Valerie. *SCUM Manifesto*. Verso Books, 2004. Pg. 48.

supposed to save her from this contemptuous existence. The semblance of care and a promise of future solidarity convince her to stay in unsatisfying circumstances.

The couple is both the problem and its solution. If not this one, she just needs another boyfriend, one that will treat her better. A woman may feel the nausea of ambivalence, of being caught between obsession with phallic power and a revulsion with it. The Invisible Committee notes both the melancholia of the couple and the melancholia of denouncing it as a social form: "From flirtation to divorce, from cohabitation to stepfamilies, everyone feels the inanity of the sad family nucleus, but most seem to believe that it would be sadder still to renounce it."²⁸

Certain discourses frame the couple as the remedy for poverty. One may stumble across tales of young people shifting between poverty and prison figured as a result of single parenting and an absent father as if the restitution of the couple could remedy the poverty produced by capitalism. State bureaucrats tell women that the couple and its production of familial relations have replaced social assistance programs: you don't need help with childcare or food stamps; you need a man! The surest way out of poverty is to get married!

Perhaps queerness and promiscuity are possible avenues away from the patriarchy of the couple. They may also be traps. The logic of the couple and of patriarchy pierces queer relationships as well as straight ones. The homosociality of gay men is more explicit than with straight men as they have cast off the mediation of women-as-commodities in their desire for each other. The closure of gay men to women reflects a clinging to phallic power and a latent misogyny. A woman will be second class company compared to what a man can provide. Lesbianism may also be a ploy. Elizabeth Grosz has written of lesbians as enacting a masculinity complex, in which the dyke aspires to be treated like and to act like men.²⁹ Lesbianism can thus be understood as a disavowal of women's castration: through female love object, the lesbian is able to function as if she has rather than is the phallus. She tries to be a man rather than tries to be a supplement to a man. Additionally, sexual desire

²⁸ The Invisible Committee. *The Coming Insurrection*.

<http://tarnac9.wordpress.com/texts/the-coming-insurrection/>

²⁹ Grosz, Elizabeth. "Lesbian Fetishism?" *Differences* 3, no. 2 (1991): 39–54.

between women has been recuperated by the male gaze as being *hot* and *sexy*.³⁰ Same sex couples do not escape either the territoriality imposed on desire nor the reign of masculinity.

Promiscuity may not go far enough. Do not mistake polyamory for a post-couple paradigm. Polyamory is an expansion of the logic of the couple including more and more relationships within its grasp, not its destruction. Causal sex, primary partners, physical availability, emotional availability, and other such distinctions usurp more relations into the negotiation of the couple. Polyamory opens up couple-like formations without the formal commitment of the couple, expanding the territoriality of the couple and its octopus-like tentacles which suck desire into the logic of the couple.

The logic of the couple has replaced the logic of god. Turn on the radio and one can hear innumerable accounts of the absolute position of the couple: *you are the only thing that matters, I cannot go on living without you, you make life worth living*. The male gaze has replaced the divine gaze. As Artaud has asked us 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God' (*Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*), let us be done with the judgment of men.³¹

Dismantling the logic of the couple must not be mistaken for a distaste for love, but rather a questioning of how love is directed towards a specific object. The couple must be contextualized within patriarchy. What is called 'love' arrives to us through the filter of gender. This is not a critique of being giddy or the feeling of the sidewalk being a trampoline. It is not to shun tiny cursive, quill pens, and overwhelming affect. It is a critique of the way that patriarchy has recuperated women's desire for solidarity, for intimacy, for excitement, for the assemblage of flows, for the event into a consolidation of phallic power.

How does one love in the wake of the couple? How does one rethink social and sexual bonds outside of the hegemony of the couple? If one accepts that the couple as a sham, as unable to allow the circulation of desire, intimacy, solidarity, and play, how does one proceed?

³⁰ Miriam, Kathy. "Toward a Phenomenology of Sex-Right: Reviving Radical Feminist Theory of Compulsory Heterosexuality" in *Hypatia* vol. 22, no. 1 (Winter 2007)

³¹ *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* (*Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*), a radio play by Antonin Artaud (1947)

Pour menstrual blood on wedding gowns. Send tigers into engagement parties.

Replace The Couple with processes of coupling, infinite double dates: you and me and the three of them and that pack of wolves and that army and Madrid! Sao Paulo! the snow! the worker's council! the children! Replace the dyad, the pair, the two halves that make a whole with third, fourth, n terms. Snatch the lover from the grasp of the couple's arms and take her outside on a walk, get caught up in a crowd.

Make love. Anything can be sex. The body is rich and varied in its parts and sensations. So many ecstasies have yet to be felt.

Couple-bust, which Valerie Solanas describes: “SCUM will couple-bust -- barge into mixed (male-female) couples, wherever they are, and bust them up.”³²

Unleash flows of desire, release them from a definite, static object. Make visible the multiplicities that have been submerged by the couple: *I didn't want to kiss you per say. I wanted everything that you were an entrance into: the smell of cigars, the doors of the city opening to me, samosas, your aunt's house in the countryside, the sense that I could walk around with my eyes closed and nothing would injure me.*

Construct feminist spaces where the action and the discourse emerge from a circle of women.

Interrogate and challenge the ways that the logic of the couple constructs families. Reconsider who is within the bounds of the family and who one visits over holidays. Rethink social bonds outside of the couple tie, the blood tie, the legal tie.

Recast the protagonists of love stories as you and a crowd of an indefinite number. The orgasms of history are more fulfilling and buoyant than the ones faked by women to reassure their husbands. The sensuality of the slow dance is minuscule in comparison to the dance of a hundred, a thousand bodies cavorting through the streets. The kind of heartbreak that comes from a failed revolution trumps any experience of sitting next

³² Solanas. Pg. 72

to a unringing phone. Many of these love stories have yet to be written. Dispel what Guy Debord refers to as “that bourgeois propaganda that presents love as the only possible adventure under modern conditions of existence...”³³

Animate other modes of social organization with love and eroticism. Have a seminar, a reading group, a political party, a street gang, a troupe of thespians that is more satisfying than two people in a bed ever could be.

*In reality, the decomposition of all social forms is a blessing. It is for us the ideal condition for a wild, massive experimentation with new arrangements, new fidelities. The famous “parental resignation” has imposed on us a confrontation with the world that demands a precocious lucidity, and foreshadows lovely revolts to come. In the death of the couple, we see the birth of troubling forms of collective affectivity, now that sex is all used up and masculinity and femininity parade around in such moth-eaten clothes, now that three decades of non-stop pornographic innovation have exhausted all the allure of transgression and liberation. We count on making that which is unconditional in relationships the armor of a political solidarity as impenetrable to state interference as a gypsy camp. There is no reason that the interminable subsidies that numerous relatives are compelled to offload onto their proletarianized progeny can’t become a form of patronage in favor of social subversion. “Becoming autonomous,” could just as easily mean learning to fight in the street, to occupy empty houses, to cease working, to love each other madly, and to shoplift. - Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection**

I strapped my boyfriend with homemade explosives and blew him up. His flesh spread everywhere. So did my affection. I'm sick of love. Let's fall in politics.

-- girl gangs everywhere

[written for the nyc feminist reading group. xxoo.]

³³ Debord, Guy. "Contribution to the Debate 'Is Surrealism Dead or Alive?'" in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Ed. Tom McDonough. MIT Press, 2004. Pg. 67

swing low sweet
swing swish slash
swallows swinging into the sky
over our swelling swan swords

skeletons at the feast